
BOOKS BY ALFRED J. SADLER

OUT OF DOORS WITH GOD

STORY-SERMONS FOR JUNIORS

JUST GOING TO

Out of Doors With God

ALFRED J. SADLER

With Introduction by
NORMAN VINCENT PEALE, D.D.
Pastor of Marble Collegiate Church, New York City

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SADLER
OUT OF DOORS WITH GOD

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Introduction

SHAKESPEARE in a famous phrase told us that the function of the actor is "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature." What the Bard of Avon would assign as the preacher's function is open to interesting speculation. Perhaps he would say it is spiritually to interpret nature. Assuredly, it is a fundamental objective of religion to help men discover the reality of God in the turmoil and bewilderment of this world. At any rate, Doctor Sadler accepts this as his task. At the outset of his ministry he set down for his continued guidance a list termed "My ideals for my ministry." Heading this list he wrote, "To make God real to men." This he has effectively done in many ways, not the least being his own winsome spirit, successful writing, and honored ministry.

The accepted methods of making God real include the preaching of the gospel, private interview, religious instruction, the inspiration of worship, the sacraments, and all "means of grace" common to the usages of the Church.

Doctor Sadler added another and all but forgotten approach to God. He directed the thought of his urban congregation to nature, man's ancient, yet, for thousands, unemployed teacher. "The woods were God's first temples," but in our mechanized civilization these altars have long since fallen into neglect. Our fathers, or at least our grandfathers, in the old days of a dominantly rural America were under the cosmic influence of nature. They

would scarcely have referred to it in those words, but the fertility and production of the soil, the changing seasons, the moods, and, as a background, the beauty of nature gave them a religious quality and philosophy. Hills and babbling brooks and silent forest and starlit nights create for most people an atmosphere more propitious to the realization of God's presence than crowded streets and hurrying throngs and the nervous tempo of city life.

So the American people go back, some to dwell—but more, like members of Doctor Sadler's congregation, to find occasional rest and pleasure—amidst the beauty spots of mountain and seashore.

Therefore take this book and strike off from the great highways into the peace of the countryside. Open it up with your back to a tree and read to the music of a stream, or in the hush of a forest, and find that this preacher is as much at home in the woods or by a campfire as in the pulpit. Guided by this skilled interpreter of nature's voice, the modern man of the city will presently find himself relearning the old skill his grandfather knew so well. To him also the Eternal God of nature will draw near. It will bring a healing peace well able to reduce life's fitful fever. This graciously written and deeply understanding book is an essential guide for the man who desires the deeper benefits of vacation experiences.

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE.

Marble Collegiate Church,
New York City, New York.

Foreword

OUT OF DOORS WITH GOD is the outgrowth of an "Outline of Bible Readings" prepared by the writer for the use of his congregation for summer reading. It met with such success that friends suggested it be made available for the general public.

In order to make it more complete, comments have been prepared for the "Daily Readings" with a special Theme for Meditation and a short prayer.

Our one desire is to help men find God for themselves, as they view the wonders of His creation, and meditate upon them. We would, therefore, recommend that those who wish to derive the most good from these studies, follow this plan:

1. Commit to memory the Memory Verse for each week and repeat it the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning. "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee."

2. Remembering Henry Drummond's words, "Ten minutes spent in Christ's society every day—aye, two minutes—will make the whole day different," set apart a certain time each day, preferably in the morning, in some quiet place for the Daily Reading, for prayer and meditation. Think upon God's Word as you have read it in the Daily Reading, or in the Theme for Special Meditation, then be still, relax and listen for His voice. Wait in expectant silence. Then let the meditation be followed by a brief prayer of thanksgiving and consecration, either the one suggested or one of the reader's own, and by at least one definite resolve to be carried out during the day.

Nature Psalms

Memory Verse for the Week: Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.—Job 37. 14b.

Thou who hast made thy dwelling fair
With flowers below, above with starry lights,
And set thine altars everywhere—
On mountain heights,
In woodlands dim with many a dream,
In valleys bright with springs,
And on the curving capes of every stream:
Thou who hast taken to thyself the wings
Of morning, to abide
Upon the secret places of the sea,
And on far islands where the tide
Visits the beauty of untrodden shores,
Waiting for worshipers to come to thee
In thy great out-of-doors!
To thee I turn, to thee I make my prayer,
God of the open air.

—*Henry van Dyke*.¹

¹ From "God of the Open Air." Reprinted by permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

CHAPTER I

DAILY READINGS

First Day, First Week

GOD'S LOVING-KINDNESS

Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.

How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.—
Psalm 36. 5-10.

Many do not see God's loving-kindness in nature as did the psalmist; like Tennyson, they see nature "red in tooth and claw." To them nature's laws are inexorable and cruel, bringing nothing but suffering in their train. May we suggest, therefore, at the beginning of this study that it is by faith and not by sight that we find God in nature as we find Him elsewhere, and that we follow the advice of Spurgeon,—“The best thing is to go from nature's God down to nature; and if you once get to nature's God and believe Him, and love Him, it is surprising how easy it is to hear music in the waves, and songs in the wild whisperings of the winds; to see

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God everywhere in the flowers, in the rocks, in the rippling brooks, and hear Him everywhere."

I made a pilgrimage to find God:
I listened to His voice at holy tombs,
Searched for the print of His immortal feet
In dust of broken altars; yet turned back
With empty heart. But on the homeward road
A great light came upon me, and I heard
The God's voice singing in a nesting lark;
Felt His sweet wonder in a swaying rose;
Received His blessing from a wayside well;
Looked on His beauty in a lover's face;
Saw His bright hand send signal from the sun.

—Edwin Markham.¹

MEDITATION AND PRAYER:² "Consider the wondrous works of God."

"Almighty God, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, we thank Thee that Thou hast not left the world without a revelation of Thy love, Thy goodness, and Thy glory. In Thy Book, in the workings of history, in the heart of a little child, and, above all, in Jesus, we may find Thee. Help us that we may stand still and consider the wondrous works of Thy hand, and then we shall find Thee in nature also, and finding Thee, may we, like the psalmist of old, worship and praise Thy holy name. In Jesus' Name, Amen."

Second Day, First Week

A GREAT NATURE POEM

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty.

Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:
who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

¹ Reprinted by permission.

² The author has given special themes for meditation and prayer, taken from or in harmony with the Daily Readings in order to give definiteness to our thought. The reader should disregard them whenever some other theme seems to him more helpful. A period of silence should follow the meditation to allow God's voice to be heard. Then a prayer of dedication, either the one given, or, better still, one of the reader's own.

Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters:
who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon
the wings of the wind:

Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should
not be removed forever.

Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment:
the waters stood above the mountains.

At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder
they hasted away.

They go up by the mountains; they go down by the
valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for
them.

Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over;
that they turn not again to cover the earth.

He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run
among the hills.

They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild
asses quench their thirst.

By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their
habitation, which sing among the branches.

He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth
is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.—Psalm 104.
1-13.

Today and tomorrow we read selections from one
of the greatest nature poems in all literature.
Notice in your reading how God reveals Himself to
the psalmist in all of His glory and strength, so that
the psalmist exclaims with an overflowing heart of
gratitude, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Is this the
result of your study of nature? Let us read the
selection again with this thought in mind.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Count your blessings, name them
one by one." "Bless the Lord, O my soul." After meditating
on your personal blessings, naming them one by one, then
bow and return your thanks in the words of this familiar
hymn, making it your own personal prayer:

*"For the beauty of the earth,
 For the beauty of the skies;
 For the love which from our birth
 Over and around us lies;
 Lord of all, to Thee we raise
 This our hymn of grateful praise."*

Show your gratitude to God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon you by doing some kindness to your fellow men today. "If you have had a kindness shown, pass it on."

Third Day, First Week

A GREAT NATURE-POEM—(Continued)

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;

And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

The trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;

Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.

The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

Thou makest darkness, and it is night; wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.

The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening.

O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.—
 Psalm 104. 14-24.

The person with a superficial knowledge of science, or one who has come in contact with the views of

modern science for the first time, is apt to think that science has taken God out of the universe. Let us remember, however, that revelation and nature are two parts of one whole, and that both parts are written by God, and are both essential to a complete understanding of God's message to the world, for they complement each other. The psalmist here recognizes God as a power or force back of all nature, the existence of which the scientist freely admits. As we study nature in this spirit we too, while accepting the assured results of modern science, will say with the psalmist: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Think over the manifold works of God as enumerated by the psalmist. Write down any others which might occur to you. Then pray that God will give you discerning minds and appreciative hearts, and that as you see His presence in His wondrous works, you may help others to discern it also.

Fourth Day, First Week

UNEXPECTED BLESSINGS REVEALED IN NATURE

Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God, for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.

The Lord doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.

Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

The Lord lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:

Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepar-

eth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.—Psalm 147. 1-9.

The psalmist has been describing the goodness, the power, and the mighty works of God as seen in the universe, and in the list we find this apparently commonplace statement, "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains." To the psalmist, however, it is anything but commonplace, rather, it is the record of a unique achievement. He expected to find grass growing in the fertile valleys, but not on the mountains, which are usually barren in Palestine. Finding it there, he cites it as a sign of the exceptional power of God. Nature is full of such surprises. Be on the watch for them today, and be not content to exclaim "Marvelous! Wonderful!" but always add in the spirit of the psalmist, "It is God who hath done this; how wonderful is He!"

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Think of other examples of God's power and goodness in nature and in everyday life, not usually recognized. Pray God to give you "seeing eyes," and as you learn to recognize His hand in these unexpected blessings, give Him the thanks.

Fifth Day, First Week

THE LORD REIGNETH

The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.

The hills melted like wax at the presence of the

Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.
The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.

Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O Lord.

For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

Ye that love the Lord, hate evil: he preserveth the souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.—Psalm 97.

The psalmist sees in these various manifestations of nature the evidences of God's power and dominion—yes, and of His righteousness also. They call him, first, to cast aside the worship of idols, and, second, to rejoice in Him. The message is appropriate for us, for, only as we cast aside all idols, that is, anything which takes the place of God in our life, and worship God in all sincerity of heart and life, can we truly rejoice in Him.

“Rejoice, ye pure in heart,
Rejoice, give thanks and sing;
Your glorious banner wave on high,
The cross of Christ your King.
Rejoice, rejoice,
Rejoice, give thanks and sing.”

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: “The Lord reigneth.” Though a large part of the world is nominally Christian, the Lord does not yet reign, and that is the reason for all the bitterness and hatred, jealousy and self-seeking, wars and threats of wars, that are so rife today. God does not reign in the councils of nations; in local politics, in business, and commerce; in our

recreations; and sometimes not even in our churches. Does He reign in your heart and mine? That is where His reign must begin. Therefore, let each one of us pray with Saint Augustine, "*Come, O Lord, in much mercy down into my soul, and take possession and dwell there.*"

Sixth Day, First Week

NATURE'S RESPONSE TO THE JOY OF THE HEART

When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.

The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?

Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?

Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.—Psalm 114.

"When Israel went out of Egypt, . . . the mountains skipped like rams." Here we have the response of nature to the joy of the heart. The Israelites were so filled with joy at their deliverance from bondage that it seemed to them that even the mountains, the most stolid objects which suggested immobility and steadfastness, even the mountains danced with joy out of sympathy with them. "The mountains skipped like rams." If we have the joy of the Lord in our hearts, even nature will take on a different aspect.

Such was the experience of Dwight L. Moody immediately after his conversion. He wrote: "I remember the morning I came out of my room after I had first trusted Christ. I thought the old sun shone a

good deal brighter than it ever had before. I thought that the sun was just smiling upon *me*. I walked out upon Boston Common, and heard the birds in the trees, and I thought they were all singing a song for *me*. I never cared for them before, but now it seemed to me I was in love with all creation."

—Dwight L. Moody.¹

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: How does nature (God's world) appear to me? The joy of heart which God brings deepens the powers of perception, clarifies the vision, transforms and glorifies the commonplace. So let me pray today: "*Dear Jesus, I now open my soul to Thy joy by allowing Thee to come in and take the control of my life. Deal with me as Thou wilt. Give me only Thy love and grace, and then my joy shall be full.*"

Seventh Day, First Week

A CALL TO PRAISE

Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created.

He hath also stablished them forever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

Fire, and hail; snow, and vapors; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

¹ Dwight L. Moody Year Book, The Book Store, Northfield, Mass.

Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:

Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.—Psalm 148. 1-13.

Significant indeed is the fact that the book of Psalms, the Jewish hymnal, which may be called the "Hymnbook of the Ages," because Jews and Christians alike have used it through all the centuries, consists so largely of songs of praise. The psalmist, overwhelmed by the goodness and greatness of God, calls upon the whole creation, animate and inanimate, to praise His holy name. We have the same obligation and privilege of praise today, no matter what our age, rank, or sex. Let us praise the Lord in the sanctuary, let us praise Him in our private devotions; above all, let us praise Him by living a cheerful life, and so demonstrate to men that true religion is a blessing in this world, bringing health of body and strength of spirit.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Praise ye the Lord." Praise is the state of mind and heart that enables us to contact God, to appreciate His creation, and to hold our thought in line with His. Close your meditations by singing, humming, or reciting the Doxology—"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

"God of mercy, God of love: The voice of unthankful men is the only voice in all the universe that has not proclaimed Thy praise. Forgive us, and may we now join, sincerely and wholeheartedly, that great chorus of thanksgiving which is going up to Thee from all nature. For Jesus' sake, Amen."

Christ and Nature

Memory Verse: For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work. . . . Thy thoughts are very deep.—Psalm 92. 4a, 5b.

Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.—Matthew 13. 9.

Judean hills are holy,
Judean hills are fair,
For one can find the footprints
Of Jesus everywhere.
One finds them in the twilight
Beneath the singing sky,
Where shepherds watch in wonder,
White planets wheeling by.

His trails are on the hillsides
And down the dales and deeps;
He walks the high horizons
Where vesper silence sleeps.
He haunts the lowly highways
Where human hopes have trod
The Via Dolorosa
Up to the heart of God.

—*William L. Stidger*.¹

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CHAPTER II

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Second Week

THE SOWER AND THE SEED

And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.—Matthew 13. 3-9.

Jesus here begins a new type of teaching—by parables. The parable (an earthly story with a heavenly meaning) arrested the attention and remained in the memory of the listener, for while the truth thus presented gradually unfolded in the devout mind, it did not arouse opposition in the minds of the enemy, which it would have done if presented more directly. The parable of the sower and the seed Jesus Himself has interpreted, emphasizing especially the different kinds of soil; that is, the varying receptions of the gospel message by different people, each one determining for himself whether the seed shall bring forth fruit, or whether it shall be choked out with weeds, or wither by the wayside. Well did Jesus say, "Take heed therefore how ye hear," for how and what we hear depends

largely upon ourselves. We can harden our hearts so that the truth will find no admittance; we can choke out the truth by the seeds of frivolity and selfish greed, so that it does enter, or we can receive the truth with an open mind and an understanding heart.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Take heed therefore how ye hear." Ask yourselves such questions as, "Do I give the word of God, no matter from what source it comes, a free entrance into my mind and heart, or am I choking it out, or even denying it admittance with my selfishness and sin?"

Then pray: "*We pray Thee, O God, that we may find Thee this week in Thy great out-of-doors, even as Jesus, our Master, found Thee. Open wide the doors and windows of our souls. Quicken our understanding, and touch our hearts with a new love for the beautiful in nature and in human life. In His name we ask it. Amen.*"

Second Day, Second Week

SEED GROWING SECRETLY

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.—Mark 4. 26-29.

This is the only parable peculiar to Mark, and is in reality a continuation of that of the sower and the seed. In the latter Jesus tells us that the seed falls into good ground and bringeth forth fruit. Here he tells us what happened to the seed after it was sown. The process of the growth is secret. Science can describe the conditions under which growth takes place, but cannot tell us the why and

wherefore of growth. It is still one of the mysterious forces of nature, even as is gravitation. The growth of the seed, while secret, is, however, gradual. "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." Character is the growth of a lifetime. You cannot achieve it in a day. Parents and teachers should remember this in their training of youth, and be patient. Young men and women themselves should remember it, and not expect to reach their goal immediately. Jesus expects them to grow, slowly but surely, to grow more manly and more womanly, more true, more kind, more courageous, and more useful. After the blade, Jesus expects the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Do not disappoint Him.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "The child grew, and waxed strong." "Thank God, a man can grow!" Am I growing physically and mentally, morally and spiritually, as the Scripture tells us Jesus did? Am I becoming more generous and kind, more brave and courageous, more trustful and less of a worrier, taking God at His word; more unselfish and useful, in a word—more Christlike? Your conscientious answers to these questions will determine your prayer of confession and consecration this morning.

Third Day, Second Week

THE TARES

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him,

Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.—Matthew 13. 24-30.

Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.—Matthew 13. 36-40.

Jesus is looking into the future, and He knows that scandals and offenses will arise in the Church and among His own disciples. The love of some will grow cold. Some will fall away, and some even will prove traitors. The earnest and faithful among them must not be discouraged, nor impatient because evil is mingled with good, and because wickedness seems to be increasing in the world. Jesus is the householder, and we can safely leave all passing of judgment to Him, but remember that the same sun which makes the wheat grow also makes the tares grow, and that the truth, if not received and obeyed, will make you more the slave of sin than before. The best way, therefore, to keep down the tares is to nourish to the utmost the life of the good seed. May these daily studies and meditations help.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares." Is there anything in my life acting as tares, preventing the good seed from having its full growth?

Tares in one farmer's field will not only spoil his own crop, but, spreading to his neighbor's field, spoil his also. What of my life in its influence upon others?

"O God, help me to be lenient in my judgment of others, leaving all condemnation to Thee, but severe in my judgment of myself. If there be any tares in my heart and life, uproot them, so that the good seed which thou hast planted, may grow and bring forth fruit." In the name of Jesus who has set us a perfect example. Amen.

Fourth Day, Second Week

THE MUSTARD SEED

And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it. And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expoundeth all things to his disciples.—Mark 4. 30-34.

This parable is more hopeful in tone than that of the sower and the seed, in which most of the seed sown failed to bear fruit. Though one of the smallest of all seeds, the mustard seed grows to be one of the greatest among herbs. So shall the kingdom of heaven be. Let us thank God that Jesus' words have been fulfilled, and that today Christianity, while most insignificant in its beginnings, has become world-wide in its scope and influence, and that the adherents of Jesus, nominally at least, now comprise a third of the human race. Wonderful indeed has been the progress of the religion of Jesus Christ. Truly,

"Out of the shadows of the night
The world rolls into light."

And the end is not yet. Let us pray and work until the prophecy of this parable shall be fulfilled, that

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run;
His kingdom spread from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate on the words of the hymn just quoted. Then pray: "*God help me to do my part, so that Thy kingdom may come and Thy will be done as in heaven so on the earth.*" Repeat slowly the Lord's Prayer with this thought in mind.

Fifth Day, Second Week

LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the market-place, and said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right, I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should

have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.—Matthew 20. 1-10.

The apparent injustice in rewarding the laborers, which troubles many, is explained by remembering that this parable is closely connected with Peter's question in the preceding chapter: "Lo, we have left all and followed thee; what then shall *we* have?" Jesus here rebukes this commercial spirit which prompts one to serve for the sake of the recompense instead of in love and gratitude. "The rewards of God's kingdom are not measured by man's desert, but by God's grace." If the Master chooses to be generous, he *can* be, for he has already been just. (Matthew 20. 13-15). But the message for *us* is, Think not about rewards. There is urgent work to be done. Are we selfishly standing idle?

"Go labor on, spend and be spent,
Thy joy to do the Father's will,
It is the way the Master went;
Should not the servant tread it still?"

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Son, go work today in my vineyard." Jesus has taken us into partnership with Himself. The success of His work depends upon our co-operation. Think what that means and then bow in prayer, and, in the words of the prophet consecrate yourself to Him. "Here am I, Lord, send me."

Sixth Day, Second Week

THE BARREN FIG TREE

He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year

also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.—Luke 13. 6-9.

This is one of the shortest of Christ's parables, yet it is full of meaning. While spoken primarily to the Jewish nation, it has a personal message for each of us. Like the fig tree we have been highly favored in our heritage and our training. Born in a Christian land, brought up in Christian homes, and in a Christian Church of which we are members, Jesus comes to us, expecting to find fruit; but too often no fruit is forthcoming. We have enjoyed all the blessings referred to, and the result is practically *nil*. Why? Remember that there is no room in God's Church for a sluggard, no room in God's vineyard for a tree that is fruitless. Solemn indeed are the words "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Yet there is one more chance. Will you take it?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Has my life been barren and unfruitful? Read Galatians 5. 22-23. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Meditate upon these words of Paul, and then pray:

"O God, forgive me for having failed Jesus, by failing my neighbors who came knocking at my door in their hour of need. They came to me looking for comfort and guidance, inspiration and help, but in vain. They found no sympathy, no patience, no peace, no love because my life was barren and unfruitful—and I a disciple of Jesus. Now in the silence I plead for Thy forgiveness, as I rededicate myself to Thee. Let Thy words abide in me, and then I shall bear fruit as Thou desirest. Amen."

Seventh Day, Second Week

THE RICH HUSBANDMAN

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plenti-

fully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.—Luke 12. 16-21.

The rich husbandman was, to all appearance, an enterprising business man, honest and energetic, making the most out of what he had. Yet God said, "Thou fool." Why? Because he left God out of his life, ignoring Him as if He did not exist. He made *self* the center of his life: "I will do this." "I will do that." *My* friends, *My* goods, *My* barns, *My* soul! How sordid and how selfish he was! Caring for himself and none besides. You condemn this man? Remember Jesus' other words, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone," and apply the message to your own heart.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: In your meditation this morning, ask yourself this personal question: "Am I making the mistake of the rich husbandman and allowing *things* to crowd God out of my heart? Remember you have neither time nor strength for everything, no matter how praiseworthy it may be. You must choose what is most worth while. Say with Livingstone, "I will place no value upon anything I possess save in its relation to the kingdom of God." In your prayer this morning ask God's forgiveness for past mistakes, then ask Him to guide you in all your choices as you put Him first.

The Heavens Above

Memory Verse: The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy-work.—Psalm 19. 1.

“If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore, and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which hath been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.”—*Ralph Waldo Emerson.*

CHAPTER III

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Third Week

GOD THE CREATOR OF THE HEAVENS

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.—Genesis 1. 6-8.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.—Genesis 1. 14-19.

A prominent feature of heathenism in Babylon and elsewhere was the worship of the heavenly bodies as gods. In the Bible they are declared, by the inspired writer of the story of creation, to be created by God for the service of men. Let us become better acquainted with these heavenly bodies, for the greater our knowledge of them, the greater will be our respect for and admiration of their

Creator. As we view them in their beauty, let our hearts be attuned to the heart of God.

Alone in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head,
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
Hearts of fire
That aeons
Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven
Like a great hill,
I watch them marching
Stately and still;

And I know that I
Am honored to be
Witness
Of so much majesty.

—Sara Teasdale.¹

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate on these two lines of Addison's inspiring hymn:

"Forever singing as they shine,
'The hand that made us is divine.'"

Then pray: "*All-powerful and all-wise God, once more we read in the book of nature the story of Thy creative power. Grant that this study of the heavens may lead us not only to admire but to worship and adore, as we give to Thee, their Creator, our heart's true love and devotion. Amen.*"

¹ "Stars," from *Flame and Shadow*. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Second Day, Third Week**THE SUN**

Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.—Psalm 84. 9-12.

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever.

O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth forever.—Psalm 136. 1-2.

To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth forever:

The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth forever.—Psalm 136. 7-8.

The sun, our daystar on high, is of more importance to us than all the other stars, for the earth and all the planets are dependent on it for their very existence. The sun gives us light and heat, without which there can be no vegetation and no life. We are not surprised that in the very earliest days men came to look upon it as a god and to worship it as such. The Hebrews, while not worshiping the sun as God, used it as an image of God because of its brilliance and beneficent powers. "The Lord our God is a sun." Before the days of Copernicus, up to the Middle Ages, the people believed that the earth was the center of the universe, and that the suns and the stars all revolved around it. But now, through the discoveries of such men as Copernicus and Galileo, we know that the sun and not the earth

is the center of our solar system, and that the earth and all the other planets revolve around it. Yet, when Copernicus and Galileo lived, the large majority of men would not believe them, and not only refused to accept their discovery, but persecuted them. Shall we today make the same mistake in the spiritual world?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Who is the center of our lives, God or self? Does God control our thoughts, our plans, our acts? If not, let us place Him in control now.

"Eternal God, Creator and Lord of all, as the sun doth control the earth in all its movements, and holds it in its orbit by the power of gravitation, so do Thou become the center of our lives, and hold us true to Thyself by the attractive power of Thine unfailing love. Amen."

Third Day, Third Week

ECLIPSES

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day.—Amos 8. 9.

Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.—Isaiah 13. 9-10.

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.—Joel 2. 1-2.

These Biblical writers saw the hand of God in all untoward happenings of nature. We are not surprised at this, for an eclipse, to which the writers evidently refer, is one of the most awe-inspiring events we have ever witnessed. The gathering darkness as the moon slowly passes before the sun, the weird unearthly light just before totality when the whole world seems to have undergone a mysterious, haunting change of color, the appearance of the corona with its prominences forming a beautiful halo around the sun when the moon finally hides it from view, the stars in their ethereal beauty, appearing in the heavens—whoever has seen these unusual phenomena will never forget them. Such can well understand how an eclipse would strike terror into the mind of ancient man, and why in 600 B. C. the Lydians and the Medes, engaged in battle, stopped fighting and concluded peace when a total eclipse occurred. No wonder the ancients thought God was angry with the world because of its sins, and so blotted out the light of the life-giving sun. But we today understanding the true explanation of the eclipse, and believing that our God is the power in and back of the universe, ruling all, say:

“God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.”

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate upon Cowper's words just quoted, coupled with the words of the Prophet, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.”

“O God, in times of doubt and questionings, when our faith is strained by the mysteries beyond our understanding, give us the courage and strength to trust, even when we do not understand. Help each one of us to say: ‘I now place my hand in Thine. Lead Thou me on. I do not ask to see the distant scene. One step enough for me.’ Amen.”

Fourth Day, Third Week

THE HEAVENS REVEAL GOD'S GLORY

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork.

Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.—Psalm 19. 1-6.

I know of nothing that will stimulate faith in God more than a few hours spent in silence and peace on a starlit night, contemplating, admiring, and spelling out the words of God's great book of the heavens; that is, if our hearts are in tune with His, if we have made the words with which the psalmist closes his psalm our prayer:

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19. 14). Then we shall be able to sing:

"Lord of all being, throned afar,
Thy glory flames from sun and star;
Center and soul of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near!"

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate on the memory verse for the week, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork."

Then pray: "*The heavens declare Thy glory, O God, and the firmament showeth Thy handywork; yet how often*

through blindness of heart have we failed to read the story Thou hast written there, and to hear Thy voice as it has come to us in the wonders of the heavens! Forgive us, and may we now lift up our eyes on high, and, as we behold Thy glory in the heavens, in the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, help us to remember that Thou, who hast created all these things, art our loving Father, and that Thy love is as infinite as the sky. Help us also to remember that, as Thou keepest the stars in their courses, so wilt Thou guide our steps in perfect harmony if we but trust in Thee, the God of heaven and of earth. We trust Thee now. Amen."

Fifth Day, Third Week

THE HEAVENS REVEAL GOD'S POWER AND WISDOM

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven, when the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?—Job 38. 31-38.

Here again we see portrayed the insignificance of man as compared with the power of God who rules the universe. To control and guide the heavenly bodies requires a force of far mightier scope and magnitude than any which is needed for our little earth. Modern astronomy, as it sets forth the magnitude of these heavenly bodies (Betelgueze, one of the stars which make up the constellation of Orion referred to, being two hundred and fifteen million miles in diameter) and the immensity of space, but

emphasizes the lesson that God would teach Job here, as to his own nothingness and God's almighty power and wisdom. Let us trust in that power and wisdom today.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: God's power in the universe is the same power that is in us, for there is but one ultimate Source of power, one ultimate Intelligence and Cause. Concentrate, therefore, on this one thought, "When I become conscious of God and His power, the impossible becomes the possible."

Then pray: *"Our Heavenly Father, whose power is greater than man's horizon, I rely on Thee. In Thee I live and move and have my being. Through Thy power within me I can do all things, for there is nothing too hard for Thee. Thou art Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, in all, through all, and over all, infinite in mercy, love, and power. I trust in Thee. Amen."*

Sixth Day, Third Week

THE HEAVENS TEACH HUMILITY

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!—Psalm 8.

The psalmist's wonder before the power of nature

gives way to amazement that God should have anything to do with him. God is so great and man so puny, so limited in power as compared with these mighty forces of nature all about him. We too have had the same feeling. A friend was visiting Carlyle at Chelsea, and as they parted at the door they looked up into the starlit sky:

"It's a grand sight," said Carlyle's friend.

"A gran' sicht, d'ye say?" cried the sage. "Mon, it's just dreadfu'!"

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate on this prayer-poem.

"My God, how wonderful Thou art,
Thy majesty how bright!
How beautiful Thy mercy seat,
In depths of burning light.

"Yet I may love Thee too, O Lord,
Almighty as Thou art;
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me
The love of my poor heart."

Make your own prayer of consecration.

Seventh Day, Third Week

THE STAR THAT LEADS TO CHRIST

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the

least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.—Matthew 2. 1-12.

Here we have one of the most beautiful stories in all literature, the "Story of the Wise Men," or "The Star that Leads to Christ." It charms old and young alike. We never tire of hearing it. How we wish that we might have seen that star! Yet we too may have our stars that lead to Christ: ideals—pure, high and lofty aims, noble friendships; conscience—the light that God has placed within us; and, above all, the Bible. Whatever may lead us to Christ, that is our Star of Bethlehem. May we follow it without fail, so that we too may offer unto the Christ Child our gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

"Star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect light."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Think of what God has made to be "Star Trails" for you. Affirm: "I will search for my particular star and follow its gleam until I find the Christ."

"Most merciful and loving God, we thank Thee for all the 'Star Trails' that lead to Christ. As the Wise Men of old followed the star until it led them to Bethlehem and the Christ Child, so may we follow our 'Star Trail' until we find Christ. Now in the stillness we would pray:

*'O Holy Child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us we pray;
Cast out our sin and enter in,
Be born in us today.' Amen."*

The Earth Beneath

Memory Verse: The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.—Psalm 24. 1.

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Earth's crammed with Heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes.
The rest sit around and pluck blackberries.
—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*

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CHAPTER IV

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Fourth Week

GOD, THE CREATOR OF THE EARTH

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.—Genesis 1. 9-10.

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?—Job 38. 1-7.

As God created the heavens above, even so He created the earth beneath. Read over the whole first chapter of Genesis, and note how many times such phrases as this occur: "*And God created,*" "*And God saw,*" "*And God said,*" "*And God called,*" "*And God made,*" "*And God set,*" "*And God blessed.*" From the beginning of the chapter unto the end this is the chief thought that is emphasized, "God, the Creator, the source of all things, the first Great Cause." Let us meditate on this thought

today: "In the beginning, God; on each step of the way, God; at the end, God."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate as suggested above.

Then pray: "*O God, our Father, Creator and Lord of all the earth, may we remember this week that the earth and all that dwell therein belong unto Thee; and that Thou art ever present, animating all things by Thy Spirit. May we also remember that the process of creation is still going on both in the world without and in the world within. Therefore, may we Thy children, whom Thou hast made in Thine own image, co-operate with Thee until all things are made new, until Thy Kingdom come and Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. In the name of Jesus. Amen.*"

Second Day, Fourth Week

THE EARTH BELONGS TO GOD

The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.—Psalm 24. 1-5.

"It is a great moment in a man's experience," said Doctor Mabie, "when he wakes to the wonder of the world about him, and begins to see it with his own eyes, and to feel afresh its subtle and penetrating charms. From that moment the familiar earth and sky become miracles once more, and his spirit is hourly recreated in their presence."

We know that this is true from our own experience. Why? Because "the earth is the Lord's, and

the fullness thereof." God is not an absentee God, living on some far-off planet or star, looking down upon the earth; He is here, animating all things by His Spirit. The earth belongs to Him, but to realize His presence to the fullest extent, and to hear His voice, we must meet the conditions laid down in the third and fourth verses of today's reading. Our hands must be clean, our hearts pure, and our lives sincere and true to ascend into the hill of the Lord and stand in His holy presence.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate upon the psalmist's words just quoted, then upon Jesus' confirmation of them: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

Then pray in the words of the psalmist:

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Or in the words of the hymn:

*One thing I of the Lord desire,
For all my way hath miry been,
Be it by water or by fire,
O make me clean.*

*If clearer vision Thou impart,
Grateful and glad my soul shall be,
But yet to have a purer heart
Is more to me.*

*So wash Thou me without, within,
Or purge with fire, if that must be—
No matter how, if only sin
Die out in me.*

—Walter G. Smith.

Third Day, Fourth Week

THE LORD OUR ROCK

Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.—Psalm 62. 1-2.

My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defense; I shall not be moved.

In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us.—Psalm 62. 5-8.

Rocks constitute a considerable portion of the substance out of which our earth is made, and because of their hardness and apparent durability, they are frequently used as illustrations by writers in both the Old and the New Testaments. This is especially true of the Hebrew poets, for many are the references to rocks in the book of Psalms. So in our reading today, where the Lord is spoken of as a "Rock." Note the frequent repetition of the pronoun "my." The psalmist is evidently speaking from a full and rich experience. In the hours of persecution and danger, trial and tribulation, God has been to him a refuge, a fortress, a high tower, a rock—expressions indicating that through hiding in God he has found security, safety, and salvation. But he is not selfish in his religion. He wants others to realize his experience. There is only one entrance, however, into that hiding place, and that is through trust. "Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us" (Psalm 62. 8). Have you learned, like the psalmist, that God is a refuge, and are you trying to bring into that refuge others beset by the storms of life?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate on the psalmist's words: "He only is my rock and my salvation."

Then pray: *"Our souls wait upon Thee, O God, knowing that we have nought to fear, that we are secure whatever ill betide. Help us to lead at least one other to that same refuge today. Amen."*

Fourth Day, Fourth Week

BUILD YOUR HOUSE UPON A ROCK

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine.—Matthew 7. 24-28.

In the Orient, where there are long dry periods or droughts, and then severe rains, people praise the strength of a house, not by saying that it will last so many years, but by saying that it will outstand the storms; for when the rains do come, after a long drought, the little mountain streams become raging torrents and sweep everything before them. Only the house built upon a rock can withstand them. Jesus used this natural phenomenon to teach a great spiritual lesson. He has been speaking of the vital connection between faith in the heart and the fruits of life, and then points out that the man who is not only a hearer but a doer, digs deep, building his character for time and eternity upon solid rock, while the man who only hears, but does nothing, has no foundation of character; but, like the house built upon the sand, when testing times come—

rains, floods, winds—collapses. Let us build our soul on the Rock, Christ Jesus, and be “doers of the word, and not hearers only.”

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: How am I building my life? Upon what foundation, sand or rock?

“O Lord Jesus, the great Master Builder, help me to build under Thy supervision and upon the foundation which Thou hast provided, a character that can stand any stress and strain, and one that will endure forever. Amen.”

Fifth Day, Fourth Week

WISDOM LIKENED UNTO PRECIOUS STONES

But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding?—Job 28. 12-20.

And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.—Job 28. 28.

In the earth there are found not only rocks and various kinds of soil, but also gold and silver and precious stones—precious stones which, because of their composition, their rarity, and their beauty, are of great value. So when Job wishes to emphasize the great value of wisdom, he compares it with precious stones (vs. 16-17).

By "wisdom" Job means here the principles of the divine government of the world, a mystery which man cannot solve. Man's wisdom, however, is to fear God and to depart from evil.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28. 28). This we can all understand and practice. Are we doing it?

"All-wise and loving Father, give us wisdom, that we may depart from evil and follow the promptings of love and duty today. Show us what is right and good, and give us strength to do it, remembering the apostle's words 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.' 'He that doeth good is of God, and he that doeth evil hath not seen God.' Grant that we may have fellowship with Thee today and walk in the light, and then shall we have wisdom and understanding. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Sixth Day, Fourth Week

THE NEW JERUSALEM AND THE PRECIOUS STONES

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven. . . . Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, accord-

ing to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.—**Revelation 21. 2; 11-21.**

John is here describing the new Jerusalem, the city of God; and in order that we might understand something of its beauties tells us that "Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone," and that the foundations "were garnished with all manner of precious stones." Some of us feel that the writer's conception of what befitted the dwelling place of God's children should have embraced, not so much the rarities of nature—the jewels and the precious stones—as the common loveliness of nature—"the gentle streams and the shady groves, and woodland glades and sunny valleys, and eternal mountains, and the far-off murmur of a peaceful ocean."

We are expected to have a part in realizing the vision of the New Jerusalem let down from heaven upon earth. Upon this thought, rather than upon the glories of heaven, let us meditate this morning.

"We are builders of that city.

All our joys and all our groans

Help to rear its shining ramparts;

All our lives are living stones.

Whether humble or exalted,
All are called to tasks sublime,
All must help alike to carry
Forward one sublime design."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "And they builded every one over against his own house."

"God of heaven and of earth, we thank Thee for the inspired souls of the ages who saw the vision of the New Jerusalem let down from heaven upon the earth, and who left all the attractions and profit of the present to follow their vision. May we have a share in the realization of that vision as we endeavor to bring to our fellow men a new sense of the living God and the joy of human brotherhood. In the name of Him who taught us to say when we pray, 'Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth.' " Amen.

Seventh Day, Fourth Week

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.—Jeremiah 18. 1-6.

Clay, another constituent, or compound of earth, is used to make pottery. In this illustration of the potter and the clay we have a beautiful illustration of God's sympathy for failures. He has an ideal for each one of us—that we should become like Jesus. Just as every revolution of the potter's wheel, and every touch of the potter's hand is to mold the

clay according to a well-conceived pattern, so God has been trying to mold us. But, as the vessel is sometimes marred in the hand of the potter, so we have failed; and the reason of the failure is not in the potter, but in ourselves. But God does not cast us aside as useless, He gives us another chance. "When the vessel is marred in the hands of the potter, he makes it again." God does not tire in forgiving, He has hope for the hopeless. His patience is infinite. So let us permit Him to have His way with us, for it is only thus that He can mold us into a vessel according to His own pattern, a vessel meet for His use.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER:

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!
Thou art the Potter, I am the clay.
Mold me and make me after Thy will,
While I am waiting yielded and still.¹

"Fashion us, O God, into the likeness of Jesus, and may no thought, or act of selfishness and sin on our part mar or obscure His image." Amen.

¹ From *The Greatest Hymns*, Hope Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois. Copyright. Used by permission.

The Mountains

Memory Verse: I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.—Psalm 121. 1.

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GOD MEETS ME IN THE MOUNTAINS

God meets me in the mountains when I climb alone
and high,
Above the wrangling sinners and the jangling
devotees,
Up where the tapered spruce will guide my glances
to the sky
And canyon walls will mutely preach their mighty
homilies.
In hush so dense that I can sense—is it my pulses
drumming
Or God's light footfall coming through the silver
aspen trees?¹

—*Badger Clark.*

¹ From *1000 Quotable Poems*, by Clark and Gillespie. Used by permission of Willett, Clark & Company.

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CHAPTER V

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Fifth Week

A CALL TO WORSHIP

O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and made a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.

The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.

For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.—Psalm 95. 1-8.

“The strength of the hills is his also.” “I have often tried to make out whether one learns more of God from mountain scenery or from the sea. I suppose that in reality He is equally to be studied everywhere in nature, but it has seemed this year as if one meets him in the ‘strength of hills’ as nowhere else. Their stillness, their heights, their abysses, their robe of perpetual white, their numberless beauties and ranges, unexplored by the most daring climbers, their very material so unlike the formation of lowland districts, their mysterious beauty, changing with the hours of the day, yet at the bottom the same—all remind one of Him” (Canon Liddon). Whenever we are thus reminded

of God, whether it be by the strength of the hills or the wideness of the sea, let us not fail to respond to the invitation of the psalmist and kneel before Him, our Maker, remembering that we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. May this be the result of our study of the mountains this week.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "The strength of the hills is his also."

After meditating upon these words, pray: "*We thank Thee, O God, for the strength of Thy steadfast hills and their uplifting beauty. May they remind us of Thine unchangeableness, and as we gaze upon them, may all low and unworthy thoughts and desires depart from us. Then shall we be prepared to respond to the invitation of the psalmist to bow in worship before Thee. Amen.*"

Second Day, Fifth Week

THE MOUNTAINS FOR VISION

And the Lord said unto Moses, Get thee up into this mount Abarim, and see the land which I have given unto the children of Israel.—Numbers 27. 12.

Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.—Matthew 4. 8-11.

In both of the references in today's reading the mountaintop was used for vision. Yet how different the vision! In the first God showed Moses the land He had promised unto the children of Israel. In the second Satan showed our Lord the kingdoms of

this world which should be His if He would only fall down and worship him. The mountaintops for vision! Yes, but it makes all the difference in the world what the vision is, and that vision will be determined to a large extent by what your soul is seeking. If, like Jesus, you are striving to do the Father's will, the visions of honor and fame, wealth and dominion over the world will make no appeal to you; but in your vision you will see in that same world needed work to be done, burdens to be lifted; in a word, opportunities of service for God and for your fellow men. *The mountaintop for vision!*

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." After meditating upon these words, pray:

"Spirit of the living God, may this quiet hour in [name place] be our Mount of Vision today, from which we shall go out with new light upon life's problems and perplexities. May our vision be not one of self-seeking and self-aggrandizement, but one of loving, self-sacrificing service. Give us the determination and the courage to put our best thoughts and our highest ideals into practice beginning today. For Jesus' sake, Amen."

Third Day, Fifth Week

THE MOUNTAINS—A SOURCE OF STRENGTH

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.

The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.—Psalm 121.

This psalm was supposed to have been written during the Babylonian Exile. Picture to yourself this man of God living in a strange land, far from home. His life is a hard one and he is lonely and homesick. The fact that his nation is deservedly suffering in exile for its sins does not help. He is discouraged and disheartened. See him standing there looking over the monotonous levels of the Babylonian plains, looking toward the west, where he knows the hills of his fatherland rise. He cannot see them, but he knows they are there. As he looks, hope comes again into his heart, for he remembers that among these hills of Judah is Jerusalem and the Temple—the dwelling place of God. He remembers how that God has promised to be with his people, and strength enters his soul. Yes, he knew whereof he wrote when he said “I will lift up mine eyes.” Let it be day by day, hour by hour, however, as spasmodic attention cannot result in any great or lasting manifestation of God’s presence and power.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills.” Meditate upon these words. Commit them to memory (yes, the whole psalm if possible) and carry them with you all the day. Constantly affirm “I now lift up mine eyes. I fear no evil. God’s strength is my strength.”

Fourth Day, Fifth Week

THE MOUNTAINTOP FOR PRAYER

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to

get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.—Matthew 14. 22-23.

And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon (whom he also named Peter), and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, and Judas, the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. And he came down with them, and stood in the plain, and the company of his disciples, and a great multitude of people out of all Judaea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, which came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; and they that were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.—Luke 6. 12-19.

If the mountains of Galilee could only speak, what stories they would have to tell of the hours which Jesus spent in meditation and prayer and communion with His Heavenly Father! He who would know God must be much alone with God, as Jesus was on the mountaintop. It is when we are alone on the heights, and the glory of heaven is not far away, that we know the joy of fellowship with God. "Jesus went up into a mountain to pray." One of the great needs of the day is more prayer. Will you follow Christ to the place of solitude, to the secret place of meditation and prayer, so that you may gain that lost soul poise, and receive that vision of service to which we made reference in a previous reading?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Read again the first three verses of today's Reading, which reveal the prayer habits of the Master, and His dependence upon the Father. Imitate His example and seek some secluded place where you can be alone to commune with your Heavenly Father. Remember that expectant waiting is as much prayer as petition. Therefore be silent and let God speak.

Fifth Day, Fifth Week

JESUS PREACHES FROM A MOUNTAIN

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:

And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.—Matthew 5. 1-12.

Here, with the mountain for his pulpit, Jesus delivered the greatest sermon ever preached—a sermon which has never lost its power, but which would revolutionize all life if it were faithfully applied. Note that it was a sermon preached, not to the multi-

tude, but to a select company of followers, for we read: "Seeing the multitude, he went up into a mountain:" and we can be very sure that only those who were in earnest and wanted to know the truth would climb the steep ascent from the shore to the plateau above, where the sermon was delivered. Let us remember, therefore, that if this wonderful Sermon, first preached to the disciples, is ever to find expression in life, it must be by us who claim to be His disciples today. So let all read and carefully study this sermon which outlines the principles of God's kingdom, giving special attention to the Beatitudes which form our reading today. Let us think about these Beatitudes (if possible commit them to memory) and meditate upon them until they become part of our very life. Then we, possessing the qualities of which they speak, shall enjoy the blessedness which our Saviour promises.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate upon the Beatitudes as suggested above.

Pray: "*O Lord, Thou hast promised that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled. Fulfill now Thy promise for us, as we silently wait before Thee. Amen.*"

Sixth Day, Fifth Week

JESUS TRANSFIGURED ON A MOUNTAIN

And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for

Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.—Matthew 17. 1-9.

We have spoken of Jesus' habit of going up into the mountains to pray. Here we note that it was while He was praying that He was transfigured. It was very evident that Jesus, in climbing the mountain, desired not only to get away from the noise and bustle of the world, but also to get near to God. So there, on the mountaintop, amid the majestic surroundings of nature, Jesus held communion with His Heavenly Father. So real was that communion that His face became radiant, shining like the sun. While the transfiguration of Jesus was in some respects unique, let us not forget that it was **a real human experience**, and that through similar communion with God our souls too may be transfigured, and that this transfiguration may be seen not only in the shining of the face, but in the ennobling and transfiguration of our lives. Then, like the disciples, we shall see no man, "save Jesus only."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "They saw no man, save Jesus only." Reconstruct the scene in your imagination, so that you too, see Jesus only. Then pray as the spirit prompts you.

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find."

Seventh Day, Fifth Week

THE GREAT COMMISSION GIVEN ON A MOUNTAIN

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.—Matthew 28. 16-20.

The mountaintop for prayer, the mountaintop for the Beatitudes, the mountaintop for transformation of life, and the mountaintop for the great commission—all are in accordance with the Master's appointment. Have you entered into communion with God on the mountaintops? Have you learned the truths of His kingdom? Has your life been transformed? Then you too will hear the Master's voice, saying, "Go." It may mean to the other side of the world, or it may mean to your neighbors next door, or on the other side of the street, but wherever it be, you will obey, remembering that it is only as you do so, that the promise of the Master will be fulfilled: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Go! Lo, I am with you alway." In your meditation upon these words of Jesus, sometimes called "The Great Commission," endeavor to realize what they mean for you. Briefly review the helpful thoughts that have come to you during the week by reading over the daily themes. Then pray:

"God of the mountains, we thank Thee for the revelation Thou hast made of Thyself on the mountaintop to Moses, to

the psalmist, to Jesus, and to Thy children through the ages. May we too receive strength and inspiration from the everlasting hills. May we too have our mountaintop visions, in which we shall see Jesus and receive His commission for service. Then, as we go down from the mountains to take up life's challenge, give us grace to stand forth like men with whole hearts and firm wills. Help us to live the mountaintop life in the valley, and bring the strength of Thy steadfast hills into the lives of those in the city who have no hills to remember. In the name of Him who was crucified on a mount—the mount of Calvary—Jesus, our Saviour. Amen.”

The Sea

Memory Verse: When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.—Isaiah 43. 2.

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea.

—*Frederick W. Faber.*

O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee:
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

—*George Matheson.*

CHAPTER VI

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Sixth Week

GOD, THE CREATOR OF THE SEA

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.—Genesis 1. 9-10.

In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.

The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.

O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.—Psalm 95. 4-6.

When we remember the extent of the sea, that it comprises nearly three fourths of the whole surface of the globe, we are not surprised that this sublime portion of the creation made a deep impression on the people of Bible days, and that they looked upon God as the creator thereof. The same is true today. We are told that Doctor Channing was one day driving with a friend on the shore of the ocean. His friend remarked, "Oh, Doctor Channing, how small we seem in view of all this!" Doctor Channing replied, "When I am in such a presence as this, I do not think of myself at all." No, he thought of God. So may we. And when we are thus reminded of God who made the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and all that in them is, let us kneel before

Him as did the Hebrews, and worshiping Him, pledge Him our heart's allegiance.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "The sea is his, and he made it."

After meditation upon these words, pray: "*O Thou, who madest the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that in them is, we bow before Thee in humble penitence this morning, knowing Thy heart is going out to us in understanding love. We remember before Thee those whom we love, whether near or far away [perchance across the seas]. Watch over them and keep them safe in the hollow of Thy hand. Amen.*"

Second Day, Sixth Week

THE SEA MANIFESTS GOD'S POWER

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.—Psalm 33. 6-9.

He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them. He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof.—Job 26. 7-11.

The gathering of the seas together in a storehouse, described in the seventh verse of the thirty-third psalm, is based on the ancient Semitic idea of a reservoir of waters beneath the earth. So do the ancient conceptions of the earth, which he has inherited from his fathers, influence the psalmist.

But the important point to notice is that he uses all that he has inherited, and all that knowledge which he has acquired for himself, to teach the wonderful power of God. It is God who has accomplished all the wonderful things which he has narrated. "For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." We are reminded of the oft-repeated phrase in the first chapter of Genesis to which reference has already been made, "And *God* said," "And it was so." Job, in even more graphic language teaches the same lesson, and ends his recital of the marvelous deeds of the Creator with the dramatic question "But the thunder of his power, who can understand?" As we read these records of God's wonderful power, as revealed in nature, let us remember that this is the same God whom Jesus has taught us to call Father, and trusting in Him, be not afraid.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." Meditate on the Memory Verse this morning.

Pray: "*O God, we thank Thee for the promise of Thy abiding presence on our voyage through life. We rejoice that Thou art not only the God of power, but also the God of love, and our Father. We are safe in Thy hands. We trust Thy love today and through all the days. Amen.*"

Third Day, Sixth Week

THE MYSTERY OF THE SEA

I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.

Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?

Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.

Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.

The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.

The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: Thine arrows also went abroad.

The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.

Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.—Psalm 77. 11-20.

“Thy way is in the sea, and thy path is in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.” The psalmist here would teach us that God has his secrets. There is a mystery about many of His acts like the mystery of the sea. These happenings of human life which we do not understand we call the mysteries of Providence, and there are many of them. Yet because we know that God is a God of love, we trust and are not afraid. With Whittier we say:

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

And so beside the Silent Sea,
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.¹

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: “Thy way is in the sea.” Meditate upon the mysteries of life. Then pray in your own way

¹ From “The Eternal Goodness.” Houghton Mifflin Company. Used by permission.

that Jesus may your Pilot be, and then trust Him to bring your ship into its desired haven. Remember love trusts and follows on even when it does not understand, "Now I know in part, but then shall I know, even as also I am known."

Fourth Day, Sixth Week

THE SEA CALMED BY JESUS

And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith? And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, What manner of man is this, that even the wind and sea obey him.—Mark 4. 35-41.

Note the power of description. How graphic is the picture! The tired Teacher sinking to sleep on the one cushion in the stern, as the tempest rages and the waves beat into the boat; the disciples' cry of terror as they awaken Him; the calmness of the Master and His masterful words; the astonishment of the disciples, and their awestruck questionings. What a picture of life! Storm-tossed on the voyage of life, we forget that Jesus is our Companion, and we are afraid—how afraid! Then in response to our cry, the Master's calm, commanding voice, "Peace, be still." Shall we not learn to trust Him whose care never fails, not even when it seems to fail, and who

is able to save to the uttermost? Then shall we be able to say,

“When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea-billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,
‘It is well, it is well, with my soul.’”

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.” Picture to yourself as graphically as possible the scene portrayed in our Daily Reading, and hear the Master’s voice saying: “Peace, be still.” Let His peace be in your heart today. Wait in silent expectation.

Fifth Day, Sixth Week

JESUS WALKS ON THE SEA

But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.—Matthew 14. 24-33.

Another sudden storm to which the Sea of Galilee was so subject has placed the disciples’ lives in jeopardy. In the story of yesterday Jesus was with them, asleep, it is true, but with them, and they had

only to rouse Him up with the cry "Save, Lord, or we perish!" but now He is far away where no cry can reach Him. What can they do? Yes, He is far away, but He has not forgotten them. He knows of their peril and sets out to their relief. The disciples, when they see Him can scarcely believe their own eyes. They are afraid and cry, "It is a ghost!" But over the waters comes that familiar voice with its reassuring message: "It is I; be not afraid." So often, on the troubled seas of our lives, the spectre that affrights us is naught but the Christ coming to our assistance. Wait for His coming in confidence, for soon you too will hear His voice "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Picture to yourself Jesus coming to the disciples on the water. Recall some scene when the Master has appeared unto you, then pray that your fears may not blind you to His presence today, nor prevent you from hearing and recognizing His voice. Affirm: "I am not afraid. I am not afraid of things. I am not afraid of people. I am not afraid of myself." "I fear no evil, for thou art with me."

Sixth Day, Sixth Week

THE DEAD SEA HEALED BY THE RIVER OF LIFE

Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and, behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ankles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters

were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that everything that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live. . . . But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.—Ezekiel 47. 1-12.

Bunyan interprets this wonderful vision as teaching the greatness of God's mercy. "This, therefore, is a wonderful thing, and shall be wondered at to all eternity—that the river of mercy, that at first did seem to be but ankle deep, should so rise and rise that at last it became waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over." Bunyan is right, for

"There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like the wideness of the sea."

But note that the life-giving stream which healed the Dead Sea and brought such blessings in its train came from out of the sanctuary. In this Oriental

language is taught a great truth, that from God's presence in the sanctuary shall flow those influences which shall renew, purify, and bless all human life. Science can do much in redeeming the waste places and making the desert to blossom as the rose, but we still need religion to bring healing to the nations. We need the life-giving stream from the sanctuary of God to redeem the waste places of human life, to banish selfishness and sin, and bring in the kingdom of God.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Revelation 22. 1). Meditate upon these words of John the Divine, then pray that the life-giving stream may flow through our lives, and then out from us to others.

We would be branches of Thy living vine,
Fountains of Thy living water,
Windows for seeing Thy truth,
Channels for bringing Thy love to man.¹

Seventh Day, Sixth Week

NO MORE SEA

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said,

¹ *Soul's Sincere Desire*, Glenn Clarke, p. 105. Reprinted by permission of Little, Brown & Company, Boston.

Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.—Revelation 21. 1-7.

Why did John, in picturing the new heaven and earth, say, "There shall be no more sea"? Many of us are like the little Scotch girl whose home was by the sea. Her mother was teaching her about heaven and quoted this passage, "There shall be no more sea." "Then," said the little girl, "I shall not like it." What did John mean? Why did he say "There shall be no more sea"? I think it was because the sea stood to John for separation. I can picture him standing on some little rock on the Isle of Patmos, and looking out across the sea in the direction in which Jerusalem lay—in the direction of home. There on the other side are the brethren whom he loves. So naturally the sea stood to him, lonely as he was, for exile and separation. We differ from John in our thoughts of the sea, but we agree with him in regard to the pain of separation, whether it be caused by land or sea, or by life or death. So the message comes to us that in the new heaven and the new earth "there shall be no more sea." All will be one, and all will be together in that day when all things are made new, and we shall see our Pilot face to face.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "And there shall be no more sea." Recall the messages of the week and then pray:

"As we stand upon the shore and look out over the mighty ocean, wonder fills our souls, and we know, O God, that Thou

art nigh. The strength of the rising tide as it flows irresistibly in, brings to us a glimpse of Thy great power. When the sea is calm, we think of Thy peace which passeth all understanding. When the waves roll high, and the tempest rages, and we are in danger from rough seas and shoals, we pray that Jesus, our Pilot be, knowing that He alone can bring our ship safely into the desired haven at last. So Thou God, God of the sea, we thank Thee for the message of faith and courage that comes to us from the sea. Help us to respond to its challenge and sail on, so that new worlds of opportunity and service may be discovered, and new continents won for Jesus. Amen."

Storms

Memory Verse: Be still, and know that I am
God.—Psalm 46. 10.

Have you lifted anchor and hoisted sail?
Does your ship stand out to sea?
Have you scoffed at peril and dared the gale
Where the waves and the wind are free?

Oh, the Sea of Faith hath storms, God knows,
And the haven is very far,
But he is my brother-in-blood who goes
With his eyes on the polar star.¹

¹ Reprinted from "The Sea of Faith," by Frederick Lawrence Knowles, by permission of the publisher, L. C. Page & Company, Boston.

CHAPTER VII

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Seventh Week

THE FLOOD

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.—Genesis 6. 5-7.

And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him. And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. Of clean beasts, and of beasts that are not clean, and of fowls, and of everything that creepeth upon the earth, there went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second

month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.—Genesis 7. 1-12.

Note, as we come to another of these ancient stories of the past, that the Hebrew chronicler differs from those of other nations (Babylonian, for example) in that he sees in these events the hand of a righteous God who has brought them to pass for a high moral purpose, and not out of mere caprice. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth." Whatever may be our explanation of this particular event, as to its cause, etc., let us remember in these devotional readings that in the mind of the chronicler the law back of it is a universal and eternal one. Sin brought its own punishment. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" is but another expression of it. Let us pray today that God will keep us from all selfish and sinful thoughts, and that the imaginations of our hearts be pure, and not evil, as were those of the men in the days of Noah.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Meditate on how "what a man thinks" molds his life—his physical, mental, and spiritual health, his character and destiny.

Pray: "*Almighty and everlasting God, unswerving in righteousness, yet how merciful and long-suffering to us-ward, not desirous that any should perish, we pray Thee that we may learn the lesson Thou would'st teach us in this ancient story. Help us to remember that Thy laws are eternal, and that the imaginations of the heart, whether good or evil, bring their own inevitable reward. So may we think today only on the things that are lovely and of good report. Amen.*"

Second Day, Seventh Week

THE RAINBOW

And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.—Genesis 9. 9-17.

The reading yesterday emphasized the truth that God is a holy and righteous God, today that He is a God of mercy. The rainbow, which always appears under certain atmospheric conditions, is taken as a sign of God's love, and witness of His faithfulness. In those primitive days men needed signs and symbols to help them understand and remember God's message. They might forget His promise, but they would not fail to see the beautiful rainbow which would recall it to their minds. May these studies in "Out of Doors With God" help us to cultivate what the late Doctor Parker calls "the spirit of moral

interpretation," and then we too shall see in the rainbow a symbol of God's faithfulness and mercy.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "He hath remembered his covenant forever." "His word never fails."

"Be thou the rainbow of the storms of life,
The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,
And tints tomorrow with prophetic ray."

Third Day, Seventh Week

GOD DISPERSES THE PHILISTINES BY THE STORM

And the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord. And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, and served the Lord only. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. And they gathered together all Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a suckling lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel

was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.—1 Samuel 7. 1-12.

The Israelites have won a great battle over the Philistines in which, in the providence of God, a thunderstorm had somehow played an important part. The prophet, therefore, rightly gives the credit to God, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Through all the ages men have used these words of the prophet to express their gratitude to God for His unfailing help in the hour of need. As we look back over our lives and see how God has been with us in the hour of storm and stress, and helped us win the victory, let us too set up our stone of remembrance and say with the prophet, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

"Here I'll raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thy help I come
And I hope by Thy good pleasure,
Safely to arrive at home."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." Recall specific instances where the Lord has helped you.

Then pray:

"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,"
as we look back over the journey of our lives and note the milestones commemorating Thy gracious help in our hours of need, we would render unto Thee our heartfelt thanks. As-

sured of that same help in the future, nothing can daunt us, but we go forward with courage and hope. Amen."

Fourth Day, Seventh Week

GOD SPEAKS OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the cornerstone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.—Job 38. I-II.

Over the shadowed and storm-tossed life of Job a whirlwind sweeps, and out of the whirlwind the voice of God speaks. Then there follows one of the most vivid descriptions in the whole Bible of how God manifests Himself in nature in all of its forms. One of the most striking of these manifestations is in the storm. It is God who scattereth the east wind upon the earth, who maketh a way for the lightning and the thunder, who causeth it to rain upon the earth. Let Job recognize, therefore, the hand of God in all things, even in the storm and in the darkness, and that His care for His creatures is beyond man's imaginings, and therefore nothing that He ordains is disastrous. As you read this marvelous

poem, for such it is, let the beauty of its thought and expression with its message of God's comforting and sustaining presence, sing itself into your hearts and lives. Then shall you be able to say with Edna St. Vincent Millay,

"O God," I cried, "no dark disguise
Can e'er hereafter hide from me
Thy radiant identity."¹

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Think of some of the various ways in which you have heard the voice of God.

Pray: "*Dear Father, sometimes Thou dost speak to us out of the whirlwind and again in the still small voice. Help us to recognize and obey Thy voice wherever and whenever it may come to us. Then may we share our experiences with others, that they too may know Thy comforting and sustaining presence in the hour of their need. Amen.*"

Fifth Day, Seventh Week

SIGNS OF THE WEATHER

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered, and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.—Matthew 16. 1-4.

And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh

¹ From *Renaissance*, published by Harper & Brothers. Copyright, 1917, by Edna St. Vincent Millay.

to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?—Luke 12. 54-57.

Another example of Christ's knowledge of nature, and His use of everyday happenings to teach spiritual lessons. These people to whom Jesus was speaking could forecast the weather. They could tell whether it would be hot, or cold, or showery. They could discern the face of the sky, but they could not discern the signs of the times, which denoted the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah. They were spiritually blind, and so did not recognize Jesus as one sent from God. Jesus therefore refused to perform a miracle at their behest to prove that He was the Messiah. His work as the healer of the sick, the shepherd of the people, the refuge of the troubled and distressed should have been sufficient. Are we making the same mistake in looking for the miraculous to prove the existence of God, when His presence is all about us, manifested, as we have already seen, in so many ways in nature? Are we so selfish, so wrapped up in ourselves and our plans, so determined to have our own way, as were the Pharisees, that we do not recognize Jesus as our Lord, nor see the path in which He would have us walk?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Let us answer frankly the above question in our meditation.

Pray: "*O God, light of the minds that see Thee, give us spiritual discernment, that we may not make the mistake of the Pharisees and fail to discern the signs of the times. Open the eyes of our understanding, that we may see Jesus as Thy answer to the world's need, the only hope of the world and our Saviour. Amen.*"

Sixth Day, Seventh Week

GOD, THE DELIVERER

They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.

For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.

They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.

Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!—
Psalm 107. 23-31.

Matchless poetry bringing an eternal message to the hearts of men is this striking description of the mariners in a storm. Only those who have experienced a storm at sea can fully appreciate this wonderful description, and the message of it, "God is our deliverer." "They cry unto the Lord, . . . he maketh the storm a calm, . . . he bringeth them unto their desired haven." Voyager, on life's troubled sea, open thine heart and hear the words of the Hebrew poet of long ago, and take courage.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Make this beautiful hymn of Charles Wesley your meditation:

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:

Hide me, O my Saviour, hide
 Till the storm of life is past;
 Safe into Thy haven guide,
 O receive my soul at last."

"O Thou ruler of all nature, we rejoice that Thou didst hold the waters in the hollow of Thy hand, and Thy faithfulness reached unto the clouds. Therefore we are not anxious or worried for the future, whether it be fair weather or foul, sunshine or storm, Thy hand will guide our ship into the haven of peace. If our lives be restless and storm-tossed because of sin, may we hear Thy voice saying, 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.' In the Name of Him at whose word the tempest was stilled, the winds ceased and the waves were calmed—Jesus, our Saviour. Amen."

Seventh Day, Seventh Week

GOD—A REFUGE FROM THE STORM

And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.—Isaiah 4. 5-6.

Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.—Isaiah 32. 1-2.

At the heart of the cyclone tearing the sky
 And flinging the clouds and the towers by
 Is a place of central calm:
 So here in the roar of mortal things,
 I have a place where my spirit sings,
 In the hollow of God's palm.¹

These words of Edwin Markham, the poet, bring

¹ From "Place of Peace." From *Shoes of Happiness*. Reprinted by permission.

us the same message as the words of Isaiah, found in Isaiah 25. 4: "God is the soul's refuge in the time of storm." We are not puppets of an evil fate, nor the playthings of blind forces. We are in the arms of our Heavenly Father, the eternal God who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand. Let this be our confidence. He is our refuge from the world without and the tumult within; our refuge in the loneliness of life, in the hour of disappointment, calamity, and loss, and in the darkness of temptation and sin, of sickness and death.

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah! leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is staid,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Be still and know that I am God."
Review the lessons of the week, then pray:

"Father of mercies, we thank Thee this morning for our everyday blessings, for the strength and refreshment received from the night's rest, for home and loved ones—life would be barren indeed without them—for friends and for what their companionship has meant to us. Their loyalty and faithfulness whether we were under a cloud or in the sunshine, passing through storms and tempests or enjoying clear weather, have helped us to understand and have faith in the Eternal Goodness which is at the heart of all things.

"So we thank Thee that life has not been all sunshine, for through the storm Thou hast developed in us strength of character and understanding of and sympathy for others, and hast revealed Thine own presence ever near. In the hour of extremity, when other helpers failed and comforts fled, Thou didst abide with us, and all is well. Amen."

Gardens and Flowers

Memory Verse: O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.—Psalm 104. 24.

The years are flowers and bloom within
Eternity's wide garden:
The rose for joy, the thorn for sin,
The gardener, God, to pardon
All wilding growths, to prune, reclaim,
And make them roselike in His name.

—*Richard Burton.*

CHAPTER VIII

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Eighth Week

THE GARDEN OF EDEN

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.—Genesis 2. 8-17.

In this ancient story of the beginning of the human race we have a beautiful truth portrayed, namely, "God walks and talks with man." It teaches that intimate and close fellowship with God is possible for His children, but that sin, alas! destroys that fellowship. Greater and more convincing than all arguments for the existence of God, gathered from

history, science, philosophy, is the argument from personal experience. We know that God is, because we have had fellowship with Him. We know that God is, for He has walked and talked with us in the garden.

A garden is a lovesome spot, God wot!
 Rose plot,
 Fringed pool,
 Ferned grot—
 The veriest school
 Of peace: and yet the fool
 Contentds that God is not—
 Not God! In gardens! When the eve is cool!
 Nay but I have a sign;
 'Tis very sure God walks in mine.

—Thomas Edward Brown.¹

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden."

Pray: "*O God of all beauty, we thank Thee for the love of beauty Thou didst implant in the hearts of men, and for the provision Thou hast made in the heavens above and the earth beneath for the gratification of that love. We thank Thee for gardens and the flowers that bloom there—for their beauty and their fragrance. As Thou didst walk in the Garden of Eden we pray Thee to walk in ours, so that we too may enjoy Thy fellowship and love. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*"

Second Day, Eighth Week

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.—John 18. 1.

And they came to a place which was named Gethsemane: and he saith to his disciples, Sit ye here, while I pray. And he taketh with him Peter and James and

¹"My Garden," from *Collected Poems*. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy, And saith unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death: tarry ye here, and watch. And he went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt. And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. And again he went away, and prayed, and spake the same words. And when he returned, he found them asleep again (for their eyes were heavy), neither wist they what to answer him. And he cometh the third time, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: it is enough, the hour is come; behold, the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up, let us go; lo, he that betrayeth me is at hand. —Mark 14. 32-42.

In the Garden of Eden fellowship with God was destroyed through disobedience; in the garden of Gethsemane the first step was taken by Jesus to restore that fellowship through obedience even unto death. "Not my will, but thine be done." As we read today this heart-rending story of Jesus in the Garden, let us remember that it was for us He passed through that agonizing struggle in order that we might enter once again into complete and unbroken fellowship with our Father, God. Let us also remember His words, spoken in the garden to His disciples, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

Go to dark Gethsemane
Ye that feel the tempter's power;
Your Redeemer's conflict see;
Watch with Him one bitter hour:

Turn not from His griefs away;
Learn of Jesus Christ to pray."

—*Richard Redfield.*

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Visualize the scene in this garden as you read the story slowly and prayerfully a second time. "Learn of Jesus Christ to pray." Then offer your own prayer as the Spirit shall guide you.

Third Day, Eighth Week

GARDENS OF SPICES AND NUTS

Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.—Song of Solomon 6. 1-3.

Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.—Song of Solomon 6. 10-11.

The Song of Songs is a collection of songs, chiefly of love and marriage. In fact, it contains some of the most beautiful love songs in all literature. While not distinctly religious, we are glad it is included in the Bible because it shows that all life is sacred. We see in it also another example of the fondness of the Jews for flowers and green fields, for orchards and gardens. Without allegorizing it overmuch, as did the Christians of bygone days who saw in the Song of Songs an allegory of Jesus and the Church, may not the figure of the garden suggest to us some spiritual lessons? As the young men of old found

human love beautiful in its intensity and loyalty in the garden, so may we find in the garden God, and draw near to Him in perfect love and understanding. "I often think," said John Fiske, "of what Linnaeus once said of the unfolding of a blossom: 'I saw God in His glory pass near me, and bowed my head in worship.'"

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." Let us pray that we too may find God in the garden, and bow our hearts in silent worship as we see Him in His glory passing by.

Fourth Day, Eighth Week

SIGNS OF SPRING

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.—Song of Solomon 2. 10-17.

Every season of the year has its charms, but to me spring is the most beautiful of all. It speaks to me of life and hope, of joy and gladness. The flowers

appear with their beauty and fragrance, and the birds with their inimitable songs. God wants us to be happy. I am glad that Easter is always in the springtime, for it re-enforces the message of that marvelous day. During the winter months the flowers have lain as if dead, buried in the cold ground, but in the spring, see them bursting forth on every side. The buds are slowly opening, for the sun is awakening them to new life. How beautiful they are! This is the message that they bring—the message of the resurrection. They tell us that those who sleep in Jesus shall rise all beautiful and glorious, like the flowers from their wintry grave. Do you wonder, then, that I say that the message of the springtime is a message of hope and joy and gladness, for it is a message of the new heaven and the new earth, a message of the life beyond? Let us then say, in the words of the old Greek hymn, “ ’Tis the spring of souls today.”

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: “For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth.”

Pray: “O Thou who art the God of life and death, may we remember as we look upon the flowers in all their beauty that but a short time ago they rose from their wintry graves. So shall it be with us and with all Thy children in the days to come. Take from us, therefore, all fear of death, and fill our minds and hearts with hope eternal. In the name of the risen Christ. Amen.”

Fifth Day, Eighth Week

ROSES AND LILIES

I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.—Song of Solomon 2. 1-2.

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad

for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.

It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.—Isaiah 35. 1-2.

In another of the love songs, to which I have already referred in our readings, the bride compares herself to the simple wild flowers that grow about her. "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys." The prophet uses the same flowers as an illustration, when he describes how the desert shall be transformed for God's people. "It shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Travelers tell us that there is no more charming sight in Palestine than the beautiful coloring of the wild flowers on the untilled plains. Surely, such sights should remind the beholder of God. "To me," said Wordsworth,

"The meanest flower that blooms can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

So it will be with us, when we remember that the Creator is manifest even in the smallest of His works.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate on these words of the poet:

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.¹

¹ From *Poems*, by Alfred Lord Tennyson. Used by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Pray: *"Eternal Goodness; who givest loveliness to the earth, we bless and praise Thy holy name for all the sweet and fair things which grow and bloom upon the earth. May the beauty and fragrance of the flowers stimulate us to lead beautiful lives, which shall delight, cheer, and inspire all with whom we come in contact, and make brighter and happier the way of little children. In the name of Jesus who loved all things beautiful. Amen."*

Sixth Day, Eighth Week

GRASS AND FLOWERS

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever.—Isaiah 40. 1-8.

In our previous reading the flowers were used to illustrate the beauty of God's world. Today the grass and the wild flowers are used to teach the frailty of human nature. Beautiful for the moment, how quickly they wither and die! Yes, but the word of the God who made them shall abide forever. So, said the prophet, to the people of Israel, "When everything else fails, God's word shall be your trust

and confidence." So let us pass through nature to nature's God, and trust in His almighty word.

"There seems a voice in every gale,
A tongue in every flower
That tells, O Lord, the wondrous tale
Of Thine almighty power."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "The word of our God shall stand forever."

Pray: "*O God, amidst the change and decay which all around we see, Thou alone remainest steadfast and secure. Help me to rest my soul in Thee today. Through cloud and sunshine abide with me. Amen.*"

Seventh Day, Eighth Week

FLOWERS, SYMBOLS OF GOD'S LOVE AND CARE

Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.—Matthew 6. 27-34.

Professor W. H. Thompson, in *The Land and the Book* (his conclusion has been verified by more recent scholars), writes: "The Huleth lily is very

large; and the three inner petals meet above, and form a gorgeous canopy, such as art never approached, and king never sat under, even in his utmost glory. And when I met this incomparable flower in all its loveliness among the oak woods around the north base of Tabor, and on the hills of Nazareth, where our Saviour spent His youth, I felt assured that it was to this He referred." Whether it was just to the lily alone Jesus referred, or whether, as some scholars think, the lily includes flowers of all kinds, it matters not. Jesus' thought is very clear, as we pointed out in our study, "Christ and Nature." God's children must not be anxious and worry about the future; neither must they always be looking and calling for the extraordinary—for manna from the sky—but they should feel that quietly, naturally, and daily will God care for them, even as He clothes the beautiful lilies and the perishable grass, and by the same power. Shall we not trust Him, then, in the coming days? Or, will Jesus say to us what He said to His disciples, "O ye of little faith"?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Your Heavenly Father knoweth ye have need of these things." There is, therefore, no cause for worry and anxiety, for you can leave everything in His hands.

Pray: "*Heavenly Father, we thank Thee for the message of the flowers which have come to our hearts this week. May they remind us, as they reminded Jesus, of Thy Fatherly care and goodness. Help us to cultivate the garden of our hearts, that we may eradicate the weeds of worry and anxiety, doubt, thoughtlessness and selfishness; and grow flowers of beauty, of love and trust, joy and peace. For Jesus' sake. Amen.*"

Trees

Memory Verse: Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.—Matthew 7. 20.

A B C'S IN GREEN

The trees are God's great alphabet:
With them He writes in shining green
Across the world His thoughts serene.

He scribbles poems against the sky
With a gay, leafy lettering,
For us and for our bettering.

The wind pulls softly at His page,
And every star and bird
Repeats in dutiful delight His word,
And every blade of grass
Flutters to class.

Like a slow child that does not heed,
I stand at summer's knees,
And from the primer of the wood
I spell that life and love are good,
I learn to read.

—*Lenora Speyer*.¹

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CHAPTER IX

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Ninth Week

TREES OF LIFE

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.—Genesis 3. 1-7.

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.—Genesis 3. 22-24.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.—Revelation 2. 7.

It is interesting to note that the Bible begins and ends with the figure of the tree of life, and it may be said that all the intervening books but form a commentary upon this text, that "by reason of his disobedience in eating of the forbidden tree, man was driven from paradise, and denied access to the tree of life; but immediately his education and discipline began so that he might be brought back into the paradise of God, and the tree of life be restored to him." Jesus, by His death upon a tree, made this possible. In this beautiful symbolic language God would teach us how men severed their fellowship with God, and what He has done to bring them back again. Let us not allow selfish appetites to gain the upper hand, and cause us to forfeit our fellowship with God in the garden; but let us listen for His voice as we commune with Him under the trees.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "To him that overcometh" (Revelation 2. 7).

Pray: *"Eternal and everliving God who art not confined within dwellings made with hands, but who dost manifest Thyself in all things great and small, speak to us this week through the trees in the city as well as in the country, even as Thou hast spoken through other forms of nature in Thy great out-of-doors. As opportunity offers may we rest under their shade, and shutting out for a little while all other voices but Thine own, may we hold sweet communion with Thee, so that we may live the overcoming life. In Jesus' name. Amen."*

Second Day, Ninth Week

SIGN OF GOD'S BLESSING

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast

forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.—Hosea 14. 4-8.

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.—Isaiah 55. 12-13.

This passage describes the future exodus from Babylon, for the people are still in exile. In that day even nature shall rejoice with God's people, and glorify God. To some, nature is nonspiritual. They do not hear God's voice speaking in it. To others, nature is a shrine of God at which He may be worshiped. It was so with the prophets. "The mountains shall break forth into singing, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Note the transformation in nature which God shall bring about, for it shall likewise be a testimony unto Him, the fir and the myrtle trees, taking the place of the thorn, and it shall be unto Him for a name as a sign of His blessing. May we also see in the trees, in their magnificent growth, their beautiful foliage, their luscious fruit, a sign of God's presence.

There's a part of the sun in an apple,
There's a part of the moon in a rose,
There's part of the flaming Pleiades
In every leaf that grows.

118 OUT OF DOORS WITH GOD

Out of the vast comes nearness,
For the God whose love we sing,
Sends a little of His heaven
To every living thing.¹

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "In him we live, and move, and have our being."

Pray: "*Almighty God in whom we live, may the trees in their strength and beauty direct our thoughts to Thee, the fountain of our life. May they help us to see Thy presence in all life, and seeing, to say, 'God, our God, my God.' Amen.*"

Third Day, Ninth Week

KING OF THE TREES

The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.—Judges 9. 8-15.

In this fable, a piece of satire of the first order, Jotham expresses his hatred for Abimelech, the murderer who has usurped the power in Israel. This man to whom Shechem has sworn allegiance, what

¹ "Out of the West," August Wright Bamberger, from *1000 Quotable Poems*, by Clark and Gillespie. Used by permission of Willett, Clark & Company.

is he? Not one of the trees like the olive or fig, which is honored and respected because of the service it renders, but nothing more than a bramblebush, a thornbush, that tears and wounds, and is only fit for the oven. Let the men of Shechem beware, for they have chosen a contemptible upstart without moral principle to rule over them. But there is a lesson in this fable of Jotham for us. If good men, who may be compared to the fruit-bearing trees—the olive, the fig, and the vine—refuse to leave their factories, their law offices, their studies, their households, to bear the burden of public office in the city and in the nation, then the danger of “bramble supremacy” is imminent. Abimelechs will appear—men without moral principle, who care only for the spoils of office and its glory. This is the danger that threatens democracy today. Let us pray that Christian men and women everywhere, ourselves among them, may realize this personal responsibility to their country, and be willing to sacrifice, so that our ideals and standards as a Christian nation may not be destroyed but maintained, not only for our sake, but for the sake of the world. “It matters not how *long* we live, but *how*.”

MEDITATION AND PRAYFR: “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”

Pray: “God of our fathers, we thank Thee for our heritage as a Christian nation. May we appreciate it more fully and endeavor to pass it on unimpaired to those who come after. Remembering that ‘righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people,’ may we choose men of honesty and integrity, of courage and vision, to be our leaders; and then may we so uphold them by our prayers and hearty co-operation, that law and order, justice and peace, may prevail. So may Thy kingdom come and Thy will be done on earth beginning in our own hearts.” Amen.

Fourth Day, Ninth Week

LIKE A TREE

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.—Psalm 1. 1-6.

This psalm is a fitting introduction to the book of Psalms, which, as Coleridge has said, comes closer to our yearnings and necessities than any other book in the Bible. In the first three verses we have portrayed the character of a good man, both positively and negatively, and his destiny. He avoids bad company and he nourishes his religious life on the Scriptures, "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Such a man is like a tree well watered, deep rooted, fruitful, and always beautiful; for his leaf does not wither. If you will keep in mind how dry and parched much of the land of Palestine is, you will appreciate the picture which the psalmist has drawn. The lesson is plain: Let us avoid those who laugh at high ideals and standards, and make sport of religious faith as being out of date, and remember that we still need the study of the Scriptures to build

Christian character. As the life-giving water is necessary to bring out the leaves and fruit upon the trees which we admire, so is the reading and meditation upon God's Word necessary to bring beauty and fruitfulness into our lives. The Bible and nature are both books of God's revelation. In our love for the latter we must not neglect the former.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "His delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

Pray: *"We thank Thee, O Lord, this morning for the revelation of Thyself in the Bible, for the wonderful words of Jesus and of all Thy other servants which have made plain to us the path of duty, and have been to us a source of strength and power. May we so study and meditate upon Thy word, whether in the Bible or in the Book of Nature, that it may be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths. Amen."*

Fifth Day, Ninth Week

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so

have I loved you: continue ye in my love.—John 15. 1-9.

In the lovely parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus shows us the close relationship that exists between Himself and His followers, and of their dependence upon Him. As the sap flows from the trunk of the tree into its several branches, so the life of Jesus is imparted to those who love Him. Apart from the vine the branch can bear no fruit, but withers and dies. Apart from Jesus the believer is lost, for Jesus is the source and sustaining power of his spiritual being. Yes, the branch needs the vine; but did you ever stop to think that the vine needs the branches, for it is through them that it bears fruit, and is a blessing? So, with all reverence, we may say that Jesus needs us. We are His fruit-bearers. It is through us that He blesses the world. Shall we fail Him?

“Abide in me, and I in you.” Companionship with Jesus? Who can estimate its power, either upon his own life, or upon the life of another?

“As some rare perfume in a vase of clay,
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own—
So, when Thou dwellest in a mortal soul,
All Heaven’s own sweetness seems around it thrown.”

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: “Abide in me, and I in you.” Read over the last paragraph again. Resolve to avail yourself now of the companionship Jesus offers.

Pray: “O Thou great Companion of our souls, go Thou with us today, strengthen, guide, and inspire us by Thy presence. Come what will may we never lose the sense of Thy presence. Sharers of Thy abundant life, may it be so manifested in our outward lives, that others may become sharers of it too, and so know by personal experience Thy joy and peace, Thy pardon and power. Amen.”

Sixth Day, Ninth Week

CURSING OF THE FIG TREE

Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.—Matthew 21. 18-22.

The punishment for not bearing fruit is the loss of power to bear fruit. That is the lesson for us to remember in this last miracle of Jesus. Jesus' power hitherto has always been used to bless and to heal. Why, then, this change, this cursing of an innocent tree, which seems on the surface to be an unreasonable and petulant act? Because Jesus wanted to teach the Jews an important and solemn lesson. God had placed them, His chosen people, in a position of great influence and opportunity. They made a great profession of holiness. They boasted of their superior goodness. But it was hypocrisy and sham; for underneath the outward forms, there was no fruit of righteousness. Like the fig tree, they had the leaves which always went with the fruit, but not the fruit itself. So Jesus causes the fig tree to wither, both as a warning and as a prophecy of the coming judgment upon a fruitless nation. Do our deeds correspond to our Christian profession? Are we bearing fruit in proportion to our spiritual oppor-

tunities and privileges, or, if Jesus should come today, would He find nothing but leaves?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate on the above questions and on this verse:

“Nothing but leaves; The spirit grieves
 O'er years of wasted life, O'er sins indulged while conscience slept,
 O'er vows and promises unkept, and reap from years of strife—
 Nothing but leaves! Nothing but leaves!”

After which pray: *“Almighty and most merciful God, forgive us if our lives have been barren, and unfruitful, if, while having the appearance of fruit-bearing trees, men when they came to us have found nothing but leaves. May we learn the lesson Jesus would have us learn when He cursed the fig tree, so that henceforth our lives may be like His—never failing those who are in need, but blessing and helping all with whom we come in contact. Amen.”*

Seventh Day, Ninth Week

A TREE KNOWN BY ITS FRUIT

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.—Matthew 7. 15-20.

This is an infallible test, both of religions in general, and of our own personal religion. Which is the true religion—Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism? By their fruits ye shall know them. When someone said to Wendell Phillips that

Hinduism was as good as Christianity, he replied "India is the answer." We profess to believe in Jesus Christ, to be His disciples. Does the world know it from our lives? Are we, as Christians, bearing good fruit? What does that mean? Paul tells us in his Letter to the Galatians, "The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control." In other words, do our lives remind the world of Jesus Christ, of His love, His purity, His unselfishness, His self-sacrifice? If so, we are truly His disciples. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "By their fruits ye shall know them." Remember, as we learned two days ago, that it is only through companionship with Jesus that we can bear fruit. If we meet the conditions we need not worry about results. Ask yourself now in the silence: "Am I a fruit-bearing Christian?" and then make your prayer of confession and consecration accordingly.

The Birds

Memory Verse: He shall cover thee with his pinions, and under his wings shalt thou take refuge.—Psalm 91. 4a.

Let us be like the bird, for a moment perched
On a frail branch while he sings.
He feels it bend, but he sings his song,
For he knows that he has wings.

—*Victor Hugo.*

CHAPTER X

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Tenth Week

THE RAVEN AND THE DOVE

And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged; the fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; and the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen. And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark, and the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again to him any more.—Genesis 8. 1-12.

The inclusion of the animals in the kindly thought of the Almighty, as described in our reading for

today, is quite different from the view of God held by other writers in those primitive days, and illustrates our contention that we may find God in nature, for He loves and cares for all of His creatures. The Flood, having reached its maximum, had begun to abate, and Noah, anxious to ascertain the actual height of the waters, so that he might know whether or not there was any dry ground on which they might land, had sent out two land birds, first a raven and then a dove. The raven did not return. That, however, was not a sure test that the water had subsided sufficiently for them to disembark, for the raven was a bird of prey and would have no difficulty in finding food. So Noah sent out a dove, a seed-eating bird. The dove, finding no place to rest, returned and was taken back into the ark. Therefore, Noah concluded that the waters still covered the face of the earth. After seven days he sends out the dove again, and again it returns but this time bearing an olive leaf in its mouth. Now, the olive does not grow at great altitudes, so Noah knew that the water was receding very fast. The third time the dove returned no more, and Noah removed the covering of the ark and ventured forth. Noah's knowledge of birds and their habits thus stood him in good stead in that critical hour. Even so the land birds flying far out at sea brought reassurance to Columbus when his men were on the verge of mutiny, and guided them to the shores of this land. How many there are, however, to whom because of their ignorance, the birds have brought no message. They take no interest in God's out-of-doors. "Eyes have they, but they see not." Let us not make that mistake, but today pray that God will open our eyes, that we may see, and give us hearts, that we may understand.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Eyes have they, but they see not."

Pray: *"O Thou Creator of all harmonies in earth and heaven since the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy, we thank Thee for the love of music which Thou hast implanted in the hearts of men, so that everywhere, in all lands and climes, men rejoice when they can say, 'The time of the singing of birds has come.' We pray Thee, therefore, that the birds may be Thy messengers, and by their sweet melodies bring the music of heaven into our souls. Amen."*

Second Day, Tenth Week

THE HAWK AND THE EAGLE

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south? Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.—Job 39. 26-30.

Beginning with the thirty-eighth chapter of this great poem of Job, we have the first speech of the Almighty in which He answers the challenge of Job to justify the treatment He had accorded him. God does not deal, however, with the question of Job's sin, nor the reason of his affliction, but puts question after question to Job concerning the mysteries of the universe, and challenges him to explain them. The questions in today's reading are two examples: "Does the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and does the eagle at thy command make her nest on high?" The message is, "Let not Job criticize God for things he cannot comprehend; but let him meditate on all these things which are but revelations of the divine power

that lives and moves through the universe, and he will find nothing too great for God's control, nor too small for His constant care. So shall his shaken faith in God's goodness and mercy be restored." With all the discoveries of modern science, the message still holds. In fact, it is re-enforced and strengthened, for we believe that back of the universe is God, guiding, controlling all things, even the birds in their flight. In Him we put our trust.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate on the following verse:

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,
And I smiled to think God's greatness flows around our
incompleteness,

Round our restlessness, His rest.

—Mrs. Browning, "Rhyme of the Dutchess May."

Pray: "*May these words sink deep into our hearts this morning, O God: 'Thy greatness flows around our incompleteness. Round our restlessness Thy rest.' May we remember that everywhere Thou art exercising Thy power and wisdom on behalf of Thy children. Naught have we to fear. So, as we live in the consciousness of Thy presence today, may we by our lives and by our words help others to share in the same glorious experience. Amen.*"

Third Day, Tenth Week

THE SPARROW AND THE SWALLOW

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!

My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God.

Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.

Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.—Psalm 84. 1-8.

The sparrow and the swallow were common in the days of the psalmist, even as they are now. Their habits were the same. They built their nests, not in the solitude of the forests, but near the haunts of men, just as they build their nests today in houses and barns. The sanctuary of God was in such disuse, said the psalmist, that the birds—the sparrows and the swallows—were using the altar as a nesting place. What a commentary on the religious life of the people! Human nature has not changed. Still the same neglect of God's house on the part of many who think that if they attend church on Christmas and Easter, or for weddings or funerals, their duty is done. But how much they miss who do not worship God regularly in the sanctuary!

“Blessed are they that dwell in thy house,
They will be still praising thee. . . .
They go from strength to strength.”

Let us find God in nature, let us listen as He speaks to us through the birds, and He does so speak:

I heard a bird at dawn of day
Sing from the autumn trees
A song so mystical and calm,
So full of certainties,

I think no man could listen long,
Except upon his knees.¹

¹ From “Overtones,” by William Alexander Percy. Reprinted by permission of Yale University Press.

But let it be the introduction to a fuller revelation of Him as we bow before Him in His temple.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Pray: *"Eternal spirit, while Thou art everywhere in nature, Thou dost reveal Thyself in a special manner in the place set apart for divine worship. Forbid that we should allow Thy house to lose its influence and fall into disuse as in the days of the psalmist, because of our neglect, but may we be faithful in our attendance as was our Master, who worshiped Thee constantly in the Holy Temple, as well as in Thine out-of-doors. May we take the peace and strength gained in the sanctuary out into the world, and brighten sadness, overcome greed and selfishness, and make happiness to abound. In Jesus' name, Amen."*

Fourth Day, Tenth Week

STIRRING UP THE EAGLE'S NEST

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: So the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.—Deuteronomy 32. 7-12.

How observant of nature were many of the writers of God's Word! The author of Deuteronomy was such an one. Being familiar with the habits of the eagle, he knew that often the mother bird would stir

up the nest in order to compel her young to trust their wings in flight. Timid and fearful, they refused to venture into the unknown air, when the mother bird would stir up the nest and compel them to fly whether or no. It doubtless seemed hard and cruel to the young eagles to have all the props cut out from beneath them, but they soon learned that it was only thus they would ever learn to fly, and enter into their heritage. Both parents and children need to learn the lesson taught by this incident. Parents should realize that the time will come when they must send forth their children to live their own lives. Having done their best to train them up in the way they should go, even as an eagle trains its young to fly, parents must be willing to trust their children and let them go; for only as the children stand alone can they ever develop strength of character and a Christlike personality.

The children, on the other hand, unlike the young eagles, are often anxious to leave the home nest and be independent. They should not lightly disregard the instructions which they have received, however, but follow them as far as possible; and thus availing themselves of the wisdom gained by the experience of others, be saved many costly mistakes. The advice of the wise man of old is still good advice to follow, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "So the Lord alone, did lead him."

Pray: *"O God, our Heavenly Father, give all parents an understanding heart in their dealings with children, so that they may be saved from foolish fondness as well as unnecessary harshness, and have wisdom to guide their children aright, knowing what to grant and what to deny."*

Bless Thou the children. Place the law of kindness in their hearts. Save them from all unnecessary mistakes and enable them to rise to their supreme opportunities. Watch over Thy children then, and guide them even as the parent eagle watches over and guides its young. Amen."

Fifth Day, Tenth Week

BORNE ON EAGLE'S WINGS

And Moses went up unto God, and the Lord called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him.—Exodus 19. 3-7.

It is a beautiful illustration which our author used to remind the Israelites of God's watchful solicitude and care. When the young eagles first attempt to fly, the parent birds hover around them and beneath them, to support them on extended wings if they lose confidence, or become exhausted. This they did when the young eagle voluntarily attempted to fly, or was compelled to do so by the stirring up of the nest about which we read yesterday. Even so, said the prophet, God had watched over the Israelites with tender care from the moment He delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians until that time. In like manner He will watch over us, and just as the mother eagle stood by her young, ready to help; and just as a ship stands by another ship in

distress; so will God stand by us in our hour of need, "A very present help in time of trouble."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "He shall cover thee with his pinions, and under his wings shalt thou take refuge."

Pray: "*O gracious Father, help us to take Thee at Thy word, and trust Thy fatherly love and care, even as the young eagle trusts the parent eagle. Though we stumble and fall may we remember that we cannot fall through Thy protecting arms. Amen.*"

Sixth Day, Tenth Week

MOUNT UP WITH WINGS

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.—Isaiah 40. 25-31.

Here the prophet brings to his people the hope and encouragement which comes from a true understanding of God. Their God is the everlasting God, the Creator and Lord of all, and the source of all strength and wisdom. Not only does He never tire, but He gives strength to those who do tire. In the

figure of the eagle, the king of birds, we have a description of the new kind of life which comes to those that wait upon the Lord. As the eagle mounts up toward the sun they are borne aloft on wings of faith and hope.

Note the progression of thought in verse thirty-one—flying, running, walking. It seems like an anticlimax, but closer thought shows that there is a true progression here. Many can get up great enthusiasm for one brief, intense moment who utterly fail in the monotonous duties of every day. Only they that renew their strength by waiting on the Lord can be victorious here. To them and them only,

“Strength will come from everyday endurance,
Grace all the way, and glory at the end.”

Will we be included in that number?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.”

Pray: *“Everlasting God, Creator and Lord, and our loving Father, we now wait upon Thee in silence. . . .*

Renew Thou our strength. . . .

Speak to us as Thou didst speak to Thy servants of old. . . . Amen.”

Seventh Day, Tenth Week

ILLUSTRATING GOD'S LOVING CARE

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?—Matthew 6. 25-26.

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not

able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.—Matthew 10. 28-31.

God cares for all, great and small. This is the message that Jesus brings to us today through the birds, just as He brought it to us through the flowers. Jesus was sure of His loving Father, and He wants us to have the same confidence. How generously He provides for the birds and watches over them! Yes, even the sparrow, so cheap and insignificant that two of them are sold for a farthing, even the sparrow does not fall to the ground without the Father's notice. And we, His children, are of much more value than many sparrows. So let us keep this thought before our minds today: "God knows, God loves, God cares."

O wonderful story of deathless love,
Each child is dear to the heart above;
He fights for me when I cannot fight;
He comforts me in the gloom of night;
He lifts the burden for He is strong;
He stills the sigh and awakes the song:
The sorrow that bows me down He bears,
And loves and pardons because He cares.

—Anonymous.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "God knows, God loves, God cares."

Pray: "*We thank thee, O loving Father, for the revelation of Thyself this week as we have studied the birds. May they remind us, as they reminded Jesus, of Thy loving watchfulness and care, thus helping us to trust Thee under all circumstances. Though the branch may bend beneath*

us, may we sing our song, knowing that Thou hast provided us with the wings of faith to soar to Thee, and as Thou dost guide the birds in their flight through the boundless sky, so wilt Thou guide us, Thy children. May our lives be hid in Thine, so that experiencing in our hearts Thy peace which passeth all understanding, we may bring peace and harmony into these lives about us in which discord and unhappiness now dwell. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Hunting and Fishing

Memory Verse: And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.—Matthew 4. 19.

Tangled in nets
Of our wild philosophy,
Caught in the backlash
Of ideas ill-cast,
Heaving the lead
Into unplumbed infinity,
Baffled, we stand
Beside the shore at last.
Snagged barbs, snarled lines,
Torn sails! What fishers we!
Teach us Thy skill
O Man of Galilee.¹

—*Albert Reginald Gold.*

¹ "Fishers," by Arthur Reginald Gold, from *1000 Quotable Poems*, by Clark and Gillespie. Used by permission of Willett, Clark & Company.

CHAPTER XI

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Eleventh Week

A GREAT HUNTER

And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright.—Genesis 25. 27-34.

Hunting and fishing are the most ancient of sports, and were naturally engaged in by all primitive peoples, for it was the chief source of their sustenance. The Israelites, however, were never addicted to hunting, but were rather contemptuous of it, as is seen in the contrast drawn between Esau, the cunning hunter, and Jacob, his brother, chosen in his stead to be the Father of the chosen. Study the characteristics of these two brothers. Esau was a typical sportsman, having those traits which make a man popular in all ages—brave, impetuous, frank, generous, open-handed, ready as we say to give away his last penny; but, unfortunately lacking in self-

control and spiritual vision. Hungry, he sells his birthright for a mess of pottage, and so shows himself to be unfit to be one of the progenitors of the people of God.

Do we have this self-control and spiritual insight which Esau lacked? Or, are we so engrossed with the satisfaction of our own physical needs, and the gratifications of our own physical desires, that we have lost sight of all things spiritual? Then, like Esau, we have sold our birthright for a mess of pottage. God help us today to choose the higher, rather than the lower, to put first things first.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection" (that is, "I keep my soul on top"). 1 Corinthians 9. 27.

Pray: "God of all life in heaven and earth, may we, whether dwellers in city, town, or country, be renewed of body and soul by the broader life which nature yields. Tired by the stress and strain of life, may the calm solitudes of mountain and valley, of forest and stream, bring to us the quiet restfulness and peace which Jesus enjoyed as we hear Thy voice speaking through them to our souls. Cleanse us of all meanness and selfishness, so that we may be always true sportsmen and play fair, ever manifesting the spirit of Christ. In the name of Jesus, the master fisherman. Amen."

Second Day, Eleventh Week

A GREAT HUNTER—(Continued)

And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. And he also had made savory meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me. And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? And he

said, I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed. And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father. And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing. And he said, Is he not rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me? And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants; and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son? And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept. And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck. And Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob. —Genesis 27. 30-41.

Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.—Hebrews 12. 16-17.

In the story for today (the whole chapter should be read) we have the sequel of yesterday's reading,

when Esau, the cunning hunter, sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Our hearts go out in sympathy to him as he is now deprived, by the duplicity of his brother and mother, of the blessing which was his due. How pathetic is Esau's cry, "Bless me, even me also, my father"! Yet the loss of the blessing naturally followed the loss of the birthright, for they always went together. It indicated the character of the man. His good points were simply those that were natural to him. There is no trace of discipline in his life. He had an uncontrollable temper. He followed his impulses, no matter where they led. And when he did repent, it was not because of sorrow for his sins, but because of sorrow for their consequences. Let us take warning from the experience of this great, yet selfish, and short-sighted hunter, and not set our thoughts wholly on ourselves and the gratification of our own desires. And when we do repent, let the tears be not simply of mortification and disappointment, but of a broken and contrite heart, which God will not despise.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "For my sake." "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Pray: *"O God, forgive us if, like Esau, we have lived for self, and for none besides. We would make the words of the hymn our sincere prayer:*

*'Because I held upon my selfish road,
And left my brother wounded by the way,
And called ambition duty, and pressed on,
O Lord I do repent.'*

Hear Thou our prayer in heaven, Thy dwelling place, and when Thou hearest, forgive. In the name of Jesus who died. Amen."

Third Day, Eleventh Week

AN UNUSUAL DEED BY ANOTHER GREAT HUNTER

And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lionlike men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow. And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand; but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear. These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. He was more honorable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard.—2 Samuel 23. 20-23.

And Benaiah, one of the mighty men of David, went down into a pit and slew a lion on a snowy day. What an unusual event! The lion belongs to tropical countries, and we should no more expect to see him wandering in his wild state in the land of frost and snow than we would expect to see a white polar bear in the neighborhood of the Equator. Only in Palestine is such a thing possible and that because of the great variety of elevations. From the highest peaks, which are about nine thousand feet above sea level, we may descend into the Jordan valley to thirteen hundred feet below sea level. From the tropical Jordan valley, therefore, the lion had strayed up into the Judean hills, and, being caught in a sudden snow storm, had taken refuge in a pit. A sudden emergency, but, Benaiah, the hunter, was prepared for it. The temptation, the difficulty that we expect is not the most dangerous. It is the unusual, the one that comes upon us without warning, like a "thief in the night," that is most liable to bring defeat in its train. We need to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. Likewise, it is the

unexpected opportunity of service that we are most apt to miss. In all probability this was the first time that this mighty hunter ever saw a lion on a snowy day, but he was ready and went down and slew it; and so won a place in the first rank of the mighty men of David. Be ready today to seize the unexpected opportunity for service, just as Jesus was when sitting at Jacob's Well in Samaria, and perchance you too may save a soul from sin and death, and send him on his way rejoicing.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Have I been alert to recognize and seize the opportunities for service as they have come to me?" Recall times you have failed. Ask God's forgiveness and then pray as a very dear friend of the writer, the late Bishop Warren L. Rogers of Ohio, used to pray the first thing every morning, after awakening, "*O God, help me to be of some use to somebody today. Amen.*"

Fourth Day, Eleventh Week

SNARES LAID FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords, they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah.—Psalm 140. 5.

Lord, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.

Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.

But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.

Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.

Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.—Psalm 141. 1-10.

Snares, cords, nets, and gins are used by the hunters in trapping. The psalmist uses them to illustrate the deceitfulness and treachery of Israel's foes, who seek her destruction. His words are still true for God's people. "Snares laid for the righteous." But we can scarcely realize that in this enlightened age there are men and women who deliberately lay snares to entrap their fellows. Yet it always has been true, and as long as greed for gold, lust and passion remain, it will continue to be true. Saloons or speakeasies, gambling dens, houses of ill-fame, are outstanding examples of this truth. Gambling, for example, has increased by leaps and bounds, and is becoming a real menace. It has invaded the most interesting of our outdoor and indoor games, including the honorable and ancient game of golf, and is robbing us of all true sportsmanship. Lotteries and games of chance abound, sometimes promoted by, or tolerated by Christian churches on the assumption that it is right to do evil that good may come. Truly many are the snares laid for the righteous, and we need to pray the prayer of the psalmist "Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity." Above all, we, as Christians, need to be on our guard today, and in the coming days, lest we thoughtlessly say or do anything that will cause

another to stumble, remembering Jesus' words, "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

Pray: "*O God we thank Thee for the promise that no temptation shall come upon us greater than we are able to bear, but with the temptation shall come a way of escape. May we, therefore, go forth with confidence today, knowing that we are fenced about by loving omnipotence, and by our faithfulness and courage help others as well as ourselves to win the victory. In Jesus' name. Amen.*"

Fifth Day, Eleventh Week

FOUR FISHERMEN

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.—Matthew 4. 18-22.

On the shores of Galilee, where Jesus so loved to be, He found the four men who were to be the first disciples, mending their nets, for they were fishers; and He said unto them, "Come, follow me." By this incident two thoughts are suggested:

(1) First, these four men were not idle, they were all industrious, working energetically at their trade when Jesus called them to a higher service. Are we

doing our best where God has placed us, even if it is only fishing?

(2) Secondly, note the swiftness of their response: "They immediately left their nets and followed him." Do we respond to Jesus with the same willingness and alacrity when He calls us, or, are we slow and tardy, always making excuses? "Young man," I once heard Mr. Moody say at a summer conference, "young man, when God calls you, you just leap to His service." Let us today watch for opportunities to thus show our love for the Master.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Pray: "*Dear Heavenly Father, help us to remember that Jesus was not only a man of prayer, but also a man of action; that He did not wait for men to come to Him, but sought out those who were in need, whether rich or poor, Pharisees or publicans, and endeavored to help them and bring them back to God. May we respond to His invitation, and following Him, become fishers of men. Amen.*"

Sixth Day, Eleventh Week

FISHING TO PAY TAXES

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.—Matthew 17. 24-27.

Jesus was a law-abiding citizen. Every Jewish man twenty years of age was expected to pay a tax for the support of the Temple. It was not compulsory, however, like the tax for the government, but was voluntary, like our church contributions today. Jesus, though He could claim exemption as the Son of God, yet chose to pay lest He should be thought to despise the Temple. So He sent Peter to catch a fish that the tax might be paid. Are we as scrupulous in paying our church obligations? A voluntary obligation, it is true, but an obligation nevertheless to "bring our tithes into the storehouse," for we are stewards of the Church, and the Church must be supported if the gospel is to be preached to the uttermost parts of the earth. Remember, Jesus sits over against the treasury. Today let me endeavor to meet all my just obligations to God and man, then may I confidently expect the approval and help of my Master.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury." Visualize the scene. Hear Jesus' voice reproving the Pharisees, and commending the widow who cast in all she had. Then make your prayer of repentance and consecration.

Seventh Day, Eleventh Week

FISHING—AN ANTIDOTE FOR SORROW AND DOUBT

After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the

morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with the fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.—John 21. 1-14.

What hallowed memories cluster around the sea of Galilee! Here the Master had preached some of His greatest sermons, and performed some of His greatest miracles. Out on the lake yonder He had bidden the winds and the waves to be calm. At eventime the disciples saw something to remind them of Jesus. As they gather on the shore something of the old spirit sweeps over them. "I go a fishing," said Peter. "We also go with thee," responded the others, and eagerly they launch out into the deep. There is nothing like work as an antidote for doubt and sorrow. The disciples were

very sorrowful, for their Master had been crucified. True, He had been raised again from the dead, and had appeared unto them, but they did not fully realize the significance of that event. Then, too, they were greatly perplexed. Christ had not yet revealed His will unto them. They did not know what to do. The future was a mystery. So they did the very best thing possible, they went to work. Even so will we find that work, and especially work for others, is one of the very best antidotes for sorrow and doubt. For, as we do our duty day by day, and endeavor to bring help and comfort to others, we too shall see Jesus standing on the shore, and our doubts and misgivings will disappear in the light of His presence, and our sorrow will be turned to joy.

From an old English parsonage
Down by the sea,
There came in the twilight
A message to me.
Its quaint Saxon legend,
Deeply engraven
Hath, as it seems to me,
Teaching for Heaven.
And on through the hours
The quiet words ring,
Like a low inspiration,
“Doe ye nexte thyng.”

Many a questioning,
Many a fear,
Many a doubt,
Hath its quieting ear.
Moment by moment
Let down from Heaven
Time, opportunity,
Guidance are given.

Fear not tomorrow,
Child of the King,
Trust them with Jesus,
"Doe ye nexte thyng."
—Anonymous.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Pray: "*Eternal God, Father of all mercies, and God of all comfort, in the quiet peace of this hour of prayer, may comfort and strength be ours, as we realize that our lives, and the lives of our dear ones are in the hands of a loving Father. Send us forth to faithfully perform our everyday duty, and to forget ourselves in thoughtful and loving service for those in need. Amen.*"

Sheep

Memory Verse: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.—Psalm 23. 1.

Have you sought for the sheep that have wandered
Far away on the dark mountains cold?

Have you gone, like the tender Shepherd,
To bring them again to the fold?

Have you followed their weary footsteps,
And the wild desert waste have you crossed,
Nor lingered, till safe home returning,

You have gathered the sheep that were lost?

—*Fanny J. Crosby.*

CHAPTER XII

DAILY READINGS

First Day, Twelfth Week

THE SHEPHERD PSALM

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.—Psalm 23.

The Shepherd Psalm is the most familiar and the best loved of all the psalms. No passage of Scripture has been more often quoted. Says Doctor Maclaren, the noted expository preacher: "The world could spare many a larger book better than this sunny little psalm. It has dried many tears and supplied the mold into which many have poured their peaceful faith." Yes, this beautiful psalm has brought hope to the hopeless, strength to the weak and courage to the army of the disappointed. It has a message for us today. Note the personal promises—twenty-eight in six short verses. Recite it again and emphasize them: "The Lord is *my* Shepherd; *I* shall not," etc. Dwell upon that thought now and during the day: "The Lord is *my* Shepherd—*my* Shepherd."

Claim the promise and live in the preciousness and inspiration of it. The Lord is not simply a shepherd having an hundred sheep, but *my* Shepherd.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "The Lord is my shepherd."

Pray: "*Lord God of Israel, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we thank Thee that each one of us can say with the psalmist 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.' We thank Thee that in the days that are past we have never been bereft of Thy Fatherly love and shepherdly care. Help us, therefore, to trust Thee both for the present and for the future; and if it be Thy will, lead us through green pastures and by still waters. But if perchance the way should lead through the dark valleys, may we still be able to say, 'I will fear no evil.' In the name of Jesus, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Amen.*"

Second Day, Twelfth Week

THE SHEEP OF HIS PASTURE

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.

Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.

Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.—Psalm 100.

If we are God's people and the sheep of His pasture, He will shepherd us and guide us; for the phrase, "the sheep of his pasture" indicates care and protection. The same God whom the psalmist, earlier in the psalm, calls "a great God, a great King above all gods, the creator and Lord of the universe," is He who guards and guides His people.

So today place yourself in the hands of your Shepherd and let Him keep you; and remember that there is *no fear* in love. "Perfect love casteth out fear." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "We are his people and the sheep of his pasture."

Pray: "*O Thou, who in every age hast been the Shepherd of Thy people, we thank Thee for watching over us during the night, and now commit ourselves to Thy guidance for this new day. Shepherd us beyond the plains of peril to the Eternal Fold where we may lie down in safety, and go in and out freely forever more. Amen.*"

Third Day, Twelfth Week

LOST SHEEP

In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace. All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the Lord, the habitation of justice, even the Lord, the hope of their fathers.—Jeremiah 50. 4-7.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.—Isaiah 53. 6.

"All we like sheep have gone astray." "My people hath been lost sheep." With such ringing words

the prophets describe the people of Israel, but their message may be widened to include all mankind. Not one of us but has faults and shortcomings, whether they be of the flesh or of the spirit. Each one is in danger today of wandering away from the fold of the Good Shepherd. Let us therefore pray that the Good Shepherd, who neither slumbers nor sleeps, will fold us safely in His love, lest, wandering away, we be overtaken by the storm and lost in the darkness. Let us pray that He will shepherd us beyond the plains of peril, and bring us safe into the Eternal Fold at last.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "All we like sheep have gone astray."

Pray: *"Almighty and most merciful Father; we have erred, and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare Thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore Thou those who are penitent; according to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake; that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of Thy holy Name. Amen."*—Book of Common Prayer.

Fourth Day, Twelfth Week

JESUS' PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.—Matthew 18. 12-13.

What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.—Luke 15. 4-7.

This parable is a gem, both in literary form and in the message it contains. In addition to the picture of the lost sheep which we studied yesterday from the Old Testament, it gives the picture of Jesus seeking the lost. "And the shepherd left the ninety and nine in the wilderness to go after that which was lost." Study that picture until you realize something of what it cost the Shepherd to find the lost sheep.

"O Shepherd with bleeding feet,
Good Shepherd with pleading voice,
What seekest Thou from hill to hill,
Sweet were the valley pastures, sweet,
The sound of flocks that bleat their joys
And eat and drink at will?
Is *one* worth seeking, when Thou hast of thine
Ninety and nine?"

The Master answers:

"How should I stay my bleeding feet?
How should I hush my pleading voice?
I who chose death and climbed a hill,
Accounting gall and wormwood sweet?
I seek my own."

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditation on Luke 15. 4 and on the poem which just precedes. Picture to yourselves the

scene, following the shepherd in his search until he finds the lost sheep.

Pray: "*O Thou, the Shepherd of our souls, keep us from wandering away like lost sheep, and if perchance we do go astray, may we be found of Thee. May Thy love, which death itself cannot dim nor sever, seek us out and bring us home again. Then may we go out in turn, and, finding other lost sheep, bring them back to the Father's fold. Amen.*"

Fifth Day, Twelfth Week

FAITHLESS SHEPHERDS

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; And I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from

their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.—
Ezekiel 34. 1-10.

In this chapter, which we are to study today and tomorrow, the prophet Ezekiel contrasts with great vividness the faithful and faithless shepherds of the people of Israel, who are described as God's flock. What a terrible indictment of the faithless shepherd in today's reading—of the men who, thinking only of themselves and their own selfish interests, have woefully neglected their solemn responsibility for the people whom God has entrusted to their charge! Doctor Moffatt has made clear the enormity of their shortcomings in his vivid translation: "You have seized the milk, you have clothed yourselves with the wool, you have killed the fatlings, but you have not fed the flock. You never put strength into the weak, you never healed the sickly, you never bandaged the cripples, you never recovered those who had been driven away, you never looked for those who were lost, and you were rough to those who were weak."

While this chapter has a special message for all religious leaders—ministers, church officers and church school teachers—there is a message for us all, no matter what our position. There is someone whom every one may influence for God, someone whom everyone may help, and for whom, to that extent, he is responsible.

How are we discharging that responsibility? Do Ezekiel's words apply to us?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Let questions such as the above search out our hearts this morning, then in our own words let us make our prayer of confession, following it by our resolution of amendment.

Sixth Day, Twelfth Week

THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERD

For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment.—Ezekiel 34. 11-16.

In marked contrast with the faithlessness of the shepherds of Israel, Ezekiel portrays the faithfulness of God. What a marvelous description it is of God's relations with His people! He will feed them upon good pastures. He will seek the lost, bandage the cripples, care for the sick, and guide and protect all. Truly, He is the Good Shepherd. Once more I would emphasize how personal are God's relations with His children. He enters into every part of their lives, watching over them with the tender solicitude of a faithful shepherd. In spite of all appearances to the contrary, we believe that this is still true, that God is what Jesus has portrayed Him—a loving Father and a faithful Shepherd. So today let us act upon that belief, and instead of being worried and anxious about many things, let

us trust our Shepherd for protection, guidance and strength, and follow where He leads.

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isaiah 40. 11).

Pray: "*O Thou Great Shepherd of the sheep, we give Thee thanks for Thy loving care over us during the past summer, and we would commit the future into Thy keeping, trusting in Thy Fatherly love, and Shepherdly care. Be very near to Thy children everywhere according to their necessity, and especially to those whom we love and whom we now mention silently before Thee May the prophet's words upon which we have meditated this morning be fulfilled for us all. Amen.*"

Seventh Day, Twelfth Week

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the

sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.—John 10. 1-16.

Artists and poets alike have vied with each other in their effort to set before the world the beautiful picture portrayed in the parable of the good shepherd. But none can equal the words of Jesus Himself. Read over again the lesson for today (King James' Version) for, while other, newer translations often throw additional light upon the Scriptures, and should therefore be studied, none can surpass the beauty and charm of the old Version in this parable and in many others. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Let these words sink deep into our hearts. Do we know Him as *our* Shepherd? Have we heard His voice calling us by name?

MEDITATION AND PRAYER: Meditate upon the words of Jesus, as quoted above: "I am the good shepherd," "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Pray: "O God, we thank Thee for the revelation of Thy love and care given to us this week through Jesus the Good Shepherd. As we rejoice in that love and care, may we not forget the sheep of which He speaks, and which must be gathered in. Keep us from narrow sectarianism and bigotry. Give us the breadth of vision and largeness of heart which Jesus had. Enthused by His example, and animated by His spirit, may we help to bring these other sheep in so that there may be one fold and one Shepherd. In the name of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, Thy Son and our Saviour. Amen."

sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.—John 10. 1-16.

Artists and poets alike have vied with each other in their effort to set before the world the beautiful picture portrayed in the parable of the good shepherd. But none can equal the words of Jesus Himself. Read over again the lesson for today (King James' Version) for, while other, newer translations often throw additional light upon the Scriptures, and should therefore be studied, none can surpass the beauty and charm of the old Version in this parable and in many others. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Let these words sink deep into our hearts. Do we know Him as *our* Shepherd? Have we heard His voice calling us by name?

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OMNIPRESENT

I found God in the dawning
In the crimson flight of night,
In the notes of the birds at matins,
In the sun-burst glory light.

I found Him in a garden,
In the dew-drenched columbine,
In the shy and modest clinging
Of the morning-glory vine.

I found Him in the patches
Of the white clouds floating high,
That touched with animation
The majestic vault of sky.

I found Him in a roadway,
Through a quiet countryside,
And on a lake at sunset,
Where the golden ripples ride.

At last in purple twilight,
In the cooling, fragrant air,
I heard God's presence whisper—
I knew that He was there.

—*Frank G. Weaver.*¹

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